THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

WILLIAM OWEN CARVER

226.6

John Newport

John Newport

226.6
A3

The Acts of the Apostles

WILLIAM OWEN CARVER, Th.D., LL.D.
Associate Professor of Interpretation of the New Testament
and Professor of Comparative Religion and Missions
in the Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary.

BROADMAN PRESS
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

John Newport

Copyright, 1916
Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention
Nashville, Tenn.

American Standard Revision Text
Copyrighted, 1901, by Thos. Nelson & Sons, New York
Used by permission

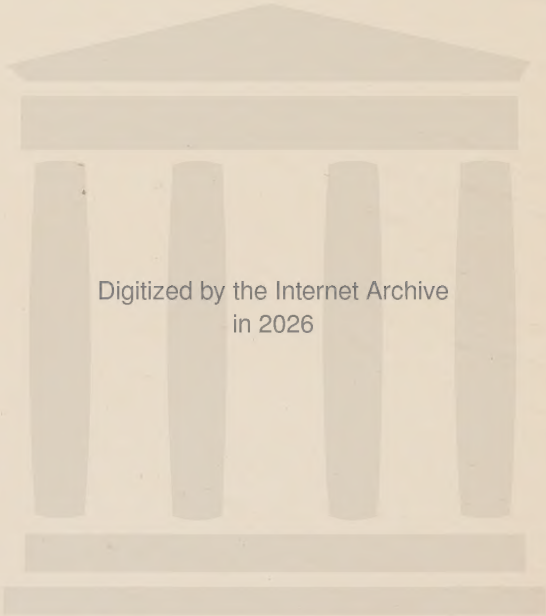
1000—5-41—3

PREFACE.

THIS is not a "critical" commentary discussing speculative questions of text, date, possible composite authorship, etc. Nor is it a "practical" commentary given over to showing how texts and passages may be used as bases for sermons and teaching application. It is hoped that the readers will find it not lacking in critical knowledge while also practically helpful for use by all who will teach by sermon, in class room of school and Sunday school, and in private. It is an honest effort, within the necessary limits imposed by the plan of the series of which it is a part, to set out clearly what the author of Acts seems to the writer of the commentary to want to say, why he said it and how it has meaning for us today. It is written with the ordinary lay reader in mind, and with the ideal of the editor of the series constantly before me. I hope it will be evident in the progress of the work that the best commentaries and general works have been freely consulted and, also, that the author has faced every section of the text with reverent and respectful independence.

I have long had the conviction that, as the gospel of the Holy Spirit, Acts is at once supremely fascinating and in importance a counterpart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit guide writer and reader in interpreting his gospel.

W. O. C.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/actsofapostles0000will_q0q0

INTRODUCTION.

Acts is the chief source of information concerning apostolic Christianity in its first forms and efforts, and an unfailing spring of inspiration and a constant standard of appeal for method and aim in Christian effort for extending and organizing the work of the kingdom of God. It is well therefore, first of all, that we briefly summarize its main features.

1. *Authorship.* In common with every other book of our Bible, Acts has been subjected to the most searching investigation in the century of critical Bible study. Twenty-five years ago one held to the "traditional view" of Luke's personal authorship on peril of his standing as a respectable scholar. Fortunately those who have never found sufficient reason for serious doubt that Luke wrote Acts now find themselves in the distinguished company of Harnack, Ramsay, Moulton and many another whose careful learning commands fullest respect. To be sure, Harnack still feels called upon to say in the "Introduction" to his *The Acts of the Apostles,* wherein he defends fully the Lukan authorship and the historical accuracy of Acts: "In an age wherein critical bypotheses, once upon a time not unfruitful, have hardened themselves into dogmas, and when if an attempt is made to defend a book against prejudice, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation, scornful remarks are made about 'special pleading,' it is not superfluous to declare that the method which is here employed is influenced by no prepossession of any kind. It is of course disgraceful that the circumstances of criticism at the present day make such a declaration necessary."

Its claim of identity of authorship with the gospel by Luke is supported by marked similarity in style in many respects, as has been illustrated by numerous examples cited by various students, and by the unanimous opinion of early Christianity. That it has one author, and not several as advocated by critical scholars for a time, is successfully shown by the unity of the work, by the correspondence of vocabulary and style in the various parts into which the

effort has been made to analyze the book, by its early acceptance as a unit and the uniform opinion to this effect down to the modern critical period when this theory of multiple authorship has been applied by its adherents to every writing of the Bible.

It is not, of course, to be supposed that Luke—or any other author—wrote without use of any sources. That some of these sources were written is quite what would be expected, and in the Introduction to his gospel this author has made it perfectly clear that it was his method to use, with discriminating care, all available sources of information, oral and written. From the fact that Peter is the so-called "hero" of the first chapters and Paul of the later chapters it has been wrongly inferred that two separate documents have been combined. It is natural to suppose, however, that Luke would find written accounts of the early doings in Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine. While in this region with Paul he would also have opportunity to consult many who shared in these experiences. Certain Hebraic expressions in these chapters reflect the sources from which Luke derived information for this part. He came to be associated with Paul probably on the second missionary journey (see below), and from him and his other associates he would be able to add to his own direct observation. The sections in which the events are narrated in the first person —the "we sections"—have come to be referred to by the analytical critics as "travel documents." Such they are, to be sure, but they do not at all indicate that they constitute a separate document used by some second century writer along with other material. Neither do they at all conclusively show that Luke was with Paul only at the times and places indicated by the use of "we" in the narratives.

That the writer really was Luke has the support of all the earlier "fathers" who refer to the writing at all, a considerable body of testimony, and by the relations revealed in Paul's writings between himself and Luke. Among all Paul's companions it can be shown that only Luke can easily be believed to be the author. The fact that he and Titus

alone of these companions are not mentioned in the Acts suggests one of them as author. It is impossible in the light of 2 Timothy 4: 10 to identify Titus with Luke. So Luke is left with no rival for this signal honor.

When and where did Luke write? This question has been stubbornly contested. It is not one of vital importance. That no hint of the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) is found in it has been used as evidence that it was completed prior to that time; but there is no compelling reason in the book itself for such mention even if the event had already occurred. It cannot have been prior to Paul's arrival in Rome, A.D. 62. That no event later than this imprisonment in Rome is hinted at has commonly been taken as evidence that the work was completed at that time. Personally, I think that during the more than two years of Paul's imprisonment in Cæsarea (24: 27) Luke completed his Gospel, or at all events, got together all his materials for it, and wrote much of Acts, and that soon after reaching Rome he put this in final form and its circulation, in a limited way, began. The earliest certain reference to it, by Clement, shows it to be known in Rome in A.D. 95.

2. *Concerning Luke, himself,* we know for certain very little save what can be learned from his writings, and we have seen that he never mentions himself except in his introductions, and then not by name. Assuming that he is included in the "we" of 16: 10–17; 20: 4—21: 18; 27: 1—28: 16, we have further Paul's reference in Colossians 4: 14 to "Luke the beloved physician," in Philemon 24, where he is included in Paul's "fellow-workers," and in 2 Timothy 4: 11, where Luke alone was with Paul in his final imprisonment, faithfully attending and helping. A strong case can be made out also in favor of Luke as "the brother" of 2 Corinthians 8: 18f, "whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches," and who was especially appointed by some churches to travel with Paul in collecting and disbursing funds for the poor Christians of Jerusalem. Indeed, we seem almost shut up to Luke as this "brother," or to Erastus.

It is agreed on all hands that he was a Gentile, and he is thus the only Gentile writer of the New Testament (unless Hebrews). The grounds for this are that he became associated with the missionaries in Asia Minor, probably in Galatia; that he is, evidently from his writings, a man of first-class Greek culture and one whose normal, if not native, language was Greek; the form of some of his references to Jews and Jewish matters; his name, which is Roman and may indicate the dignity of Roman citizenship.

He was a physician and among the Greeks this required thorough education in the schools, and gave honor and standing. That Luke had marked appreciation of culture is clear from the recognition he gives to the winning of people of the better classes to Christianity, and from the dedication of his works to Theophilus. His interest in women and their place in the kingdom is also evident in both his works. It is he who tells of the organized society of women who attended Jesus and the Twelve (Gospel 8: 2f); and in Acts at almost every turn the part played by women appears.

How Luke came to be a Christian we are nowhere told, nor whether he was already a proselyte worshiper of the true God. That he was a man of the finest spiritual insight, of deep experience, and of humble yet enthusiastic and joyful obedience in the gospel breathes on every page of his writing. He is emphatic and clear in attributing all religious experience and work to God as its source. In this he was a congenial spirit to associate with Paul. And it was his contact with Paul, humanly speaking, that gave him his position in Christian history. It is not improbable that his being a physician is the primary reason for his attending Paul. That Paul was in a large sense his hero seems evident. His devotion to him and unfailing loyalty make one of the most beautiful features of his personality and work. He and Paul were used of God to give us—and the race—more than half the New Testament, and the bulk of the contribution by each of them is almost exactly the same, crediting Paul with all the Pastoral Epistles.

That they influenced each other greatly can be seen by careful comparison of their vocabularies and ideas. Luke is remarkable for his accuracy. Sir W. M. Ramsay began as an extreme critic of Luke as an historian. After half a century of study, in which he has come to be the foremost authority on Paul's history not only in this generation but in all time, Prof. Ramsay is an ardent defender of Luke's ability and authenticity. Much the same can be said of Harnack, for although he has given place in one of his books to a very extended list of "instances of inaccuracy and discrepancy" in Acts, they serve, in the end, rather to confirm than to weaken Luke's reputation for careful exactness. Some detailed illustrations of this will be indicated in our studies.

3. *Purpose.* Luke's purpose he indicates in the opening sentence as being to complete the story of the deeds of Jesus begun in his Gospel. The two books were, in his thinking, parts of one whole. He wanted to tell how Jesus, the Christ, had won, and was now so rapidly extending, his hold on men. He wanted to have a share in that extension and his pen was his most facile instrument to that end. He would tell the story of the beginning of Christianity, for in it he saw a new force in history, the supreme force for redeeming humanity and realizing the purpose of its creation. With the instinct of an historian, and with the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he recognized that Jesus was the supreme Maker of history, and he would tell his story. It was given Luke to see this story in two parts, with two Persons creating them. In Jesus he found God coming into the life of humanity "to guide our feet into the way of peace" and to "save his people from their sins;" and he wrote the gospel of the Saviour of men. He saw also this Saviour realizing his work through the Holy Spirit. In the early successes of the gospel in Palestine and in its later conquests in all sections of the Roman world, Luke saw God, in the Holy Spirit, enduing men for witnessing and witnessing with these men to Jesus as the Christ. Thus alone could the wonderful facts be explained. Thus had

Jesus planned and provided. So Luke wrote the gospel of the Holy Spirit. The two gospels made up for him, as for Paul, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." They were equally important.

It is, I believe, no mere fancy that Acts can be interpreted thus, but it is the formative idea in Luke's structure of his work. And it is from this standpoint that this commentary proceeds. God, present in his Holy Spirit, is felt and revealed in the entire story. The title by which the book is commonly known, "*The Acts of the Apostles*," is not found in the oldest manuscripts. Its oldest title is simply "*Acts*," but this is not found earlier than the fourth century. Only three of the Twelve are mentioned at all after the first chapter. It was not to tell the story of men, not even of apostles, that Luke wrote, not even of Peter, the great leader, nor of Paul, the mighty herald and teacher. He would rather show how the Holy Spirit carried forward the work Jesus began. In this work men are agents, but the Spirit is the Power and the Mind. Luke selects for record those "acts" which reveal and illustrate the plan and method of the Holy Spirit. In this plan the full story of no man finds place. And he emphasizes results. At every section we find him eager to tell of believers won to the Lord.

4. *Outline of the Book.* I think that Luke's own plan was to construct a narrative of how the Holy Spirit took the plan of Jesus and put it into operation in the disciples of Jesus. In the commission at the ascension, which is recorded only in Acts (1: 6–8), a geographical plan is given and this is the key to the logical analysis of the book. The missionaries were to witness (1) "in Jerusalem;" (2) "in all Judæa and Samaria," where the word 'all" and the article occur only once, showing that Judæa and Samaria are to be thought of as parts of a unitary division; (3) "unto the uttermost part of the earth." After an introductory section, six chapters tell of witnessing in Jerusalem, five of the work in Judæa and Samaria, gradually leading to the wider world, to which the last sixteen chapters are devoted.

THE ACTS.

I The [1]former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, 2 until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom

[1]Gr. *first.*

INTRODUCTION.—Promise of the Holy Spirit and preparation for his coming and work. Chap. 1.

1. CONNECTION OF THIS BOOK WITH THE GOSPEL. 1–3.

Luke addresses this second "treatise," as he had his "former," the Gospel, to Theophilus. About him nothing is known. The name means *God-lover*, and some have understood it to be addressed to anyone who chose to apply it to himself. The more usual and more probable view is that he was a friend and patron of Luke and of the gospel. "The former treatise" had to do with "all" the things "that Jesus began both to do and to teach." The second half of this opening sentence is not given by Luke, but is obvious (see Introduction). In this second treatise Luke will continue the story and tell about the things Jesus continued to do and teach after his ascension. In his flesh and in the Holy Spirit the work of Jesus includes *doing* and *teaching*. The doing is first and is interpreted by the teaching which in turn puts others to doing. When true, Christianity has always these two elements, deed and creed, active energy and propagating faith.

"The day in which he was received up" marks the logical and necessary division of the ministry of Jesus, separating his personal work in physical incarnation from his continuous work in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Hence the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gospel of the Holy Spirit, counterparts of the one gospel of redemption through the

The author in his comments has used his own translation throughout, indicating this by quotation marks.

he had chosen: 3 to whom he also [2]showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: 4 and, [3]being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but

[2]Gr. *presented.* [3]Or, *eating with them*

atonement. Jesus' personal work was not complete until he had *chosen the apostles* and *had given them commandment* concerning his plans and their part in them. (cf. John ch. 17). Luke says that Jesus did this "through the Holy Spirit," so that the two were working together even in the work and plan of Jesus (cf., specially Luke 4: 1, 14, 17–18, 21; John 3: 34; Luke 11: 20).

During "forty days" between the resurrection and the ascension Jesus "showed" ("presented" in Greek) himself "alive" with many indubitable evidences to chosen witnesses. He was *seen by them* on ten reported occasions, under various circumstances, in all by more than five hundred certainly (cf. 1 Cor. 15: 6), and taught them "the things concerning the kingdom of God." This, which was the dominant idea of his ministry, is still the topic of teaching after his resurrection. These forty days, then, were occupied with two essential matters: (1) Giving a sure basis for faith in his resurrection, which was for all the apostles the basal fact of the gospel, reflecting in their own emphasis the importance Jesus placed upon this; (2) teaching those on whom now lay the human responsibility for preaching, defining and fulfilling the kingdom of God. Jesus gave a secure foundation for faith and a comprehensive program for work.

2. The Promise, as Part of the Plan of Jesus. 4, 5.

On one of these occasions when Jesus was "assembled together" with his apostles "he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem" until endued with power. Apparently this was the group in the upper room on the day of the resurrection. (cf. Luke 24: 49). They are to await the promise

to wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said he*, ye heard from me: 5 for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized [a]in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

[a]Or, *with*

---

of the Father which Jesus had given them and which he now assures them is very shortly to be fulfilled (cf., especially John 14: 12–26; 16: 7–14. Not all their previous experience, not even all his teaching, was sufficient for the work they had to do. John had introduced baptism as a symbol in his great revolutionary work. There is no objection to the reading "baptized with water," for the case in Greek is instrumental, and the instrument is water. Of course, being *baptism* the water is used in *immersion* which is only the Latin equivalent of the Greek word *baptism*. Committal of themselves publicly to the kingdom of God in baptism did not suffice for the duties now falling upon the followers of Jesus as agents of that kingdom. They needed also to be baptized in—and here the case is locative and the local preposition *'ev* is used—the Holy Spirit. For the work of the kingdom this baptism in the Holy Spirit is the supremely important experience. What this means it is hoped will appear with reasonable clearness as the study of the Acts proceeds. Here let us note only that it means burial and saturation of the personality in the influence and control of God so that the human person and the divine work together. It is important to keep in mind in all discussion of the Holy Spirit's work that the promises of his coming and the record of his presence all indicate that his function is making human witnesses effective in testifying to the work and grace of Jesus Christ. It will be best to summarize his work at the end of our studies.

3. The Commission, Calling for Exclusive Interest in the One Duty. 6–11.

Jesus' words concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit are more than a promise; they are a summons. At the end

6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath [5]set within his own authority. 8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both

[5]Or, *appointed by*

---

of the forty days Jesus is again with the faithful believers. They seem to feel that a climax is at hand.

(1) They begin with a question: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They touch a point that for a hundred years has pressed upon Jewish sensitiveness and oppressed religious hope. Since 63 B.C. their land of promise had been a province of the Roman Empire, while for more than six hundred years "the people of God's own possession" had had no real independence and no dominion such as they thought God had promised. These followers of Jesus had expected him to bring national restoration and political glory. Let us not misjudge them. Jesus had succeeded in shifting the emphasis in their thinking to the spiritual aspects of God's plan. But even though they had learned that Jesus did not place a material kingdom first in his plans they were not prepared to dismiss it wholly, for they placed this among "the sure mercies of David." Surely it must hold some place in the scheme of their Lord. Possibly now he would set Israel in independence and power.

(2) With almost abrupt firmness Jesus bids them once for all to set aside this question. "Times" and "seasons" are not for them to know. The Father holds these "within his own authority." We must leave them there. Our whole, sole duty is to witness for Jesus and our first concern must be to receive power to do this effectively. Do not be asking for a dominion for yourselves but seek dynamic (*dunamin*) for service in the gospel. This power you shall receive in the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you. The background of the Master's words, "Ye shall be my wit-

in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they were

---

nesses," can be seen by study of John 15: 26, 27, and Luke 24: 48, and then Isaiah 43: 8–10; 44: 6–8, for the expression is found exactly in both the passages in Isaiah. God desires to convince the peoples of the earth of his truth and mercy and to bring them to salvation. This he must do by human witnesses. He plans conditions for their witnessing and empowers them in it. Jesus now gives a geographical program which the history in Acts follows (see Introduction). The application of this geographical division to local, home and foreign missions is legitimate and in harmony with the Lord's idea. We must not lose sight, though, of the special reasons for beginning with Jerusalem and the Jews. The continuity of God's plan of revelation requires this and its practical wisdom is evident all through Acts.

Each giving of the commission has its characteristic features to which heed must be given if we are rightly to understand them. It is a common blunder to suppose that the commission of Matthew 28 was given at the ascension, and it has come to be called "the Great Commission." It is also frequently assumed that in Mark, Luke and Acts we have only other versions of that in Matthew, while that in John (20: 21ff) is often entirely overlooked. We really have the commission given on different occasions, to different groups, and to individuals. Each calls for individual study and for comparison with the others. The account before us is all we have of the ascension commission (cf. Luke 24: 50ff).

(3) With the promise of power and the commission of universal witnessing, in the full gaze of his followers, Jesus passes from their sight in a cloud (verses 9–11). We need not linger with the childish question of how Jesus went *up* into heaven, since the earth is round. The point is that henceforth Jesus is to be perceived not by physical

looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into the upper chamber, where they were abiding; both

---

sensation but by spiritual insight; and, further, that the unlimited divine energy is now available for them in their glorified Lord. He is no longer *with* them only, but will be within them (cf. John 14: 17, 23; 16: 7ff; 2 Cor. 5: 16). Having suffered, the Christ has now entered into his glory (Luke 24: 26).

Somewhat dazed, and quite overwhelmed it is but natural that they stood with necks intently stretched, gazing upward. Two "men" called them to consciousness of their situation, gave them fresh assurance and restored their balance. Of the identity of these "two men" we know nothing. From their "white apparel" and the mystery of their appearance they are accounted angels. They may as well have been Moses and Elias. We do not know. They delivered a great message: "This Jesus, the one taken up into heaven, will come in just this way." This must be taken as a pledge of the personal second coming of the Lord and not as wholly fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit. This passage does not say that he will come again on this spot nor again to live a human life. Personally, gloriously, mysteriously he will come.

4. Preparation for the Coming of the Spirit. 12–26.

(1) They obey, waiting at Jerusalem (*verses* 12–14). They return from Olivet, about two miles. In his Gospel (24: 52), Luke adds "with great joy," which throws light on their understanding of the promise and of the ascension. "The upper room" cannot be definitely located. "The large upper

Peter and John and [6]James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, [6]James *the son* of Alphæus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the* [7]*son* of [6]James. 14 These all with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, [8]with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

[6]Or, *Jacob.* [7]Or, brother See Jude 1. [8]Or, *with* certain *women*

room" of Luke 22: 12 naturally suggests itself. It seems (ch. 2) to have been convenient to the temple.

The company is now more fully defined than before. The Eleven were all there. The list of names here may be compared with those in Matthew 10: 2–4; Mark 3: 16–19; Luke 6: 14–16 (cf. Broadus, Com. on Matthew, and Harmony of the Gospels). Then there were "the women" and Mary and Jesus' natural brothers. The Greek clearly says that all the brothers were there. Whether in the company at first, and so at the ascension, all the hundred and twenty of verse 15 were present is not wholly clear, but it seems so. Certainly all these understood themselves to be included in the promise and the commission and all shared in these on Pentecost. It is fitting that "Mary the mother of Jesus" is singled out for special mention. The brothers of Jesus had not believed in his Messiahship six months before his crucifixion (John 7: 5). At some time after his resurrection, apparently toward the close of the forty days, Jesus had shown himself especially to James (1 Cor. 15: 7). Whether this was the means of the conversion of the brothers or they had already come to faith in him we cannot tell. We shall meet James later as the leader of the Jerusalem church (ch. 15 and cf. Gal. 2: 9). He will already have written a letter interpreting the practical demands of the religion of his Brother who is now recognized as his Master (James 1: 1); and Jude, another of the brothers, will write a vigorous short letter.

(2) The company *apply their strength to prayer* (*verse* 14a). Such is the literal meaning. This they did "with one accord," with common spirit and impulse. A good way to

15 And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren, and said (and there was a multitude of [9]persons *gathered* together, about a hundred and twenty), 16 Breth-

[9]Gr. *names.* See Rev. 3, 4.

occupy the waiting time, and this united prayer has its place in the coming of the Holy Spirit a few days later. The statement in the Gospel (24: 53) that "they were continually in the temple blessing God" may be a general statement and not apply to this ten days of waiting; or it may even locate "the upper room" in the temple buildings.

(3) Completing the body of witnesses (verses 15–26). The one hundred and twenty praying together constitute the effective outcome of the personal ministry of Jesus. Of all the tens of thousands of "disciples" he had at various times, of the many who "believed on him," it turned out that to the vast majority "he could not trust himself" (John 2: 24). Something "above five hundred" could be gathered by the combined appeals of obedience, faith and curiosity to meet the risen Lord in Galilee, where most of them lived (cf. Matt. 28: 10, 16; 1 Cor. 15: 6). These all seem to have heard "the Great Commission" of Matthew 28: 18–20. Only these one hundred and twenty gave themselves over to the work, passed from mere discipleship to apostleship. We may suppose there were others whose duties made it impossible for them to go from Galilee to Jerusalem but who were prepared to give their testimony when the time —and the power—came. Views will differ as to whether the commission—we must rather, as we have seen, say commissions—came to all believers simply as believers, to the apostles as representatives, or to believers as organized in a church. We may reasonably conclude that if any one of these views was a matter of absolute importance the account would be quite explicit. Taking all the commissions, the history of apostolic practice and the general teaching of the New Testament into account there can be no question that Jesus calls and commissions every believer and

that he expects the believers to work together in churches in fulfilling their commission. (See the author's *Missions in the Plan of the Ages*, and these studies at chapter 13, etc.)

The hundred and twenty felt free to conduct business, and regarded themselves as an organized body of witnesses of Jesus. It is useless to seek a specific date or occasion for the first constitution of a church of Jesus Christ. The church rather grew into its organization than was organized at a specific time. It was more an organism than an organization. The ready agreement of all on type of organization and method of procedure in all the New Testament period fits in perfectly with the belief that these disciples fell so readily into the transaction of business just because Jesus had instructed them in this matter. And the Gospels give us hints of organization suggested and effected by Jesus.

Of course Peter took the lead. That was Peter's way. It was also clearly the Lord's wish and the pleasure of the brotherhood. Here then we have the first meetings of the church of the ascended Lord, whatever the exact measure and manner of its organization at the time. It was one of the most significant assemblies ever met in history. It was the introduction into human society of a revolutionizing institution, an institution that, after the family, is the most fundamental of all in human progress. How little attention it attracted then! Yet very soon God was to fill it with the power of his presence and this democratic institution of plain human men and women come together to work with God to redeem the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. No ecumenical council in all ecclesiastical history has meant so much, no political convention in all the making of states, no educational conference in all the growth of culture. It was only the first of millions of such gatherings, but that is why it was so significant. It began a new era. Its ideal is a democracy of redeemed personality.

ren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus
17 For he was numbered among us, and received his [10]portion in this ministry. 18 (Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch that in their language that field was called Akeldama, that is, The field of blood.) 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms,

[1]Let his habitation be made desolate,
And let no man dwell therein:

and,

[2]His [3]office let another take.

21 Of the men therefore that have companied with us all

[10]Or, *lot.* [1]Ps. lxix, 25. [2]Ps. cix, 8. [3]Gr. *overseership.*

First Peter explains the necessity for taking action. "Gentlemen, brethren," as it may be rendered, was his form of address, a recognition of equality and fraternity at the start. Judas' course was inevitable, having been anticipated in the Scripture which the Holy Spirit gave through David. The Old Testament was God's word for the early Christians. Not that Judas inevitably did his evil, against his will or contrary to his character. He himself plotted to be "guide to them that took Jesus." It was foreseen by the Holy Spirit and in his plan. The note about Judas in verse 18f is by Luke and not part of Peter's speech. This is clear from verse 19. Peter probably made some specific reference to it as his quotation, for Psalm 69: 25 applies to this phase of the case. The other quotation is from 119: 8. That Jesus gave Judas place among the Twelve and his "lot in the ministry" was his offer to Judas of all that the others got. For Peter it suggests also that Jesus wanted twelve authoritative and representative witnesses to his ministry and mission (cf. on this Mark 3: 14f; John 17: 6–19). Their Bible suggested the traitor and the filling of his place. Peter shows (*verses* 21f) that the new witness must have been actively associated with Jesus and his

the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out [4]among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection. 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom thou hast chosen, 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place. 26 And they

[4]Or, *over*

---

followers from the very beginning, during the whole time that Jesus "went in and went out among us" until the ascension, so that he could be a personal witness to it all including the resurrection. Two were found to fill the conditions and were put forward, apparently by the whole church, in some appropriate manner. If any others had been in constant attendance only these two seemed in every way suitable.

Now they seek divine guidance as to God's choice between the two. The prayer here addressed to the Lord, while possibly addressing Jesus thus, is more probably employing the Hebrew address to God. Later prayer directly to the Lord may be found, but hardly yet. They call God "the heart-knowing one of all men." They think of God as already having made the choice, probably from the beginning, since the defection of Judas was predicted. They seek only for God's choice to be revealed. The prayer makes further reference to Judas. "Ministry and apostleship" represent the personal service of Christ and official representation of him. The word for *deaconship* is employed but that office was not yet instituted and the word never in the New Testament comes to have the fixed technical meaning (see chapter 6). The proper phrase about Judas is that he *went away*, deserted, not "fell away" for that idea is not at all in the Greek word, and "he went off to proceed into the place that was his very own," to follow the exactness of Luke's language.

gave lots [5]for them: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

[5]Or, *unto*

The prayer over, they "cast lots," an immemorial custom of Jews, in common with other peoples. The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was now *voted into a position with the twelve apostles.* "Was numbered with" is inadequate. Luke's word may even mean was harmoniously (*i. e.*, unanimously) voted in, but this cannot be insisted upon. The vote is clear. Not a little good energy has been expended in discussing the propriety of this action. They were certainly not out of harmony with the mind of the Spirit and of the Master. True, Matthias does not appear by name again in the New Testament. That does not prove he was of no account. Eight others of the Twelve are no more mentioned. Peter was not seeking to guard an ecclesiastical offical body, but was looking to the end of a thoroughly established gospel.

Nor does Paul's apostleship show that he was the divine choice to fill the Judas vacancy for he is never recognized as of this group and insists on holding himself in a separate classification.

Now we have the witnesses ready, waiting, expectant.

I. Witnessing in Jerusalem. Chapters 2—8: 1.

Following the outline of duty as given by Jesus, and accepted by his followers, and the outline of record as given by Luke, we have now six chapters setting forth characteristic features of the witness in Jerusalem. The duration of this period is not at all indicated in this section of Acts and cannot be determined with any definite certainty. For the later chapters in Acts the chronological data are far more satisfactory. Scholars have devoted painstaking care in praiseworthy research on this point but without consensus of conclusion. It has been fairly fixed that the ascension was in 29, and the best established calculations

allow from three to five years for the history of this section. It is for us now a matter of no vital importance, but the shorter period seems more probable.

1. The Advent of the Spirit and the Inauguration of His Work. Chap. 2.

This is a chapter of beginnings. It is to be compared with Luke 2. In the Gospel, chapter 1 records events preparatory to the advent of the Messiah, while chapter 2 records his coming as Jesus. We have seen how the first chapter of Acts deals with the preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 2 tells of his advent. These two advents are the counterparts and complements of each other. That of Jesus was for achieving salvation, that of the Spirit for its proclamation and realization. Jesus made atonement, the Spirit applies it. Jesus produced his church, the Spirit fills it and causes it to realize its mission. Christ Jesus is the foundation, the Spirit is the builder. The advent of the Saviour was in humility and he grew into power by the processes normal in human beings whose nature he was assuming and whose experiences he was to share. The Spirit came with might and immediately began his ministry, for he was to give power to men already brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ in spirit. He would also work in the hearts of men to make the witness of the gospel effective in them, for if men are to come into the kingdom of God they must do more than submit to a baptism. They must first be born of the Spirit, which means a renewal of mind and heart and will so that they become more than natural in disposition and power to will and do what God wills. To do God's work men must be specially empowered by God's Spirit. It is this that Jesus was urging.

We must, therefore, place great emphasis on this advent of the Holy Spirit. As we linger with reverent love about the manger of Bethlehem, so we should draw near to Pentecost and learn its meaning. God and man became per-

fectly united in Jesus of Nazareth that God and man might be organically united in the church, which is Christ's mystical and historical body, the institution and organism in which by the Holy Spirit God lives in the social life of the world. Here then we have, clearly, that baptism in the Holy Spirit of which Jesus had spoken. It was both an individual experience and a group anointing, both a personal infilling and an institutional vitalizing. The church was not now caused to be, any more than Jesus was caused to be the Christ by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon him at baptism. In both cases it marked the approval of God for an assigned function and the powerful presence of God in the discharge of that function. In a certain sense this coming of the Holy Spirit upon believing and witnessing followers was once for all, neither requiring nor allowing repetition. For here was fulfilled the plan and covenant anticipated in Isaiah 59: 21: "My Spirit which is upon thee and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and forever." Jesus was "building his church" (Matt. 16: 18), and now that "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16: 7) had come upon it, "the gates of Hades would never prevail against it."

In another sense this experience will need to be repeated over and over. We shall find it so in Acts, and it must be so in all the witnessing life of the church.

This was a baptism in the sense of the complete enveloping of the human personality of these men and women in the influences of another Personality, so that he expressed himself through them; and in the sense that the church as an institution was set apart to its end. This was an infilling in the sense that the Spirit came within the personality of each witness and ensouled the church. It was an enduement, an empowering, in that to individuals and to the church power was imparted so to witness as to reveal God and change men.

2 And when the day of Pentecost [6]was now come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them tongues [7]parting asunder,

[6]Gr. *was being fulfilled.*
[7]Or, *parting among them* Or, *distributing themselves*

(1) The manifestation (*verses* 1–4). It came on the day of the festival of the completed grain harvest (cf. Exodus 23: 16; Deut. 16: 8, 10; 26: 5–10; Lev. 23: 17–21). It was one of the three great annual Jewish feasts which all male Jews were expected to attend and was therefore an opportune time for that witnessing which was the immediate business of the Spirit. It was also historically the Hebrew celebration of the giving of the Law at Sinai. Jesus had been crucified at Passover and fulfilled that type, and there was a fitness now in fulfilling the feast of Sinai with the putting of God's laws in the mind of his people and writing them on their hearts (cf. Jer. 31: 31ff, with Heb. 8: 8ff).

They were all together at the same place when, without any previous indication, two unusual physical signs came upon them; out of heaven came a sound—an echo—"just like the blowing of a strong wind in its rushing," and this sound—it is not suggested that there was any actual wind—filled all the house; and there appeared to them tongues, as if of fire, separating themselves from each other—not cloven, but only each tongue parting itself from the rest so that one tongue sat upon each one of them there in the room. These were the signs and symbols of the Holy Spirit. Power like that of the wind and zealous speech suggested by the tongues were for their witnessing under the influence of the Spirit. And now they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking with tongues other than that which was native and usual to them. This power was not under the control of the speakers primarily but was exercised "as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Every conceivable natural explanation of these phenomena has been brought forward by men but nothing meets the sit-

like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound was heard, the multitudes came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and

---

uation but to accept the facts as frankly told by Luke. No earthquake or blast will avail, no thunder storm or electrical display will fit. The "tongues" were not "ecstatic speech," nor "exalted poetic diction," nor various languages which different ones in the company knew. Nor was the miracle in the hearer while all the speakers used the common Aramaic tongue. It was a miraculous demonstration. It has its difficulties because it is not like anything we know today. It was similar to the "tongues" at Corinth and elsewhere, but also different from them, in that this was comprehensible to the hearers generally. The modern gibberish of ignorant fanatics is at best but a poor imitation of the Corinthian "tongues" on which Paul put a low estimate, and are by no means comparable to the "tongues" of Pentecost.

Even here while the gift was for the sake of speaking "the mighty works . . . of God," it did not supernaturally provide the witnesses with a foreign language for permanent use in missionary work.

(2) The sensation in the city (verses 5–13) was great. Devout Jews had come in from every country to reside in Jerusalem, some of them because they were expecting the Messiah, some because they wanted to spend their last days there, some for a pilgrimage and temporary sojourn. The sound in the room where the disciples were may have been generally heard and so the people came together, or "the report of this" may have spread quickly as the disciples came out talking. The multitude came together, whether in the temple courts or elsewhere, and were amazed that every one heard these Galileans speaking in his native dialect. The Parthians, Medes and Elamites were descend-

marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilæans? 8 And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, 10 in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, *saying*, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words. 15 For these are not

---

ants of the Northern Ten Tribes carried away by Shalmanezer II. "Dwellers in Mesopotamia" were Jews of the later Babylonian captivity. After Judæa, Luke passes to provinces and sections of Asia Minor; thence to Egypt and two sections of Africa just west of Egypt. Then there were sojourners from Rome. Finally from the island of Crete and from Arabia there were some. The "confusion of tongues" at Babel was reversed in this "gift of tongues" for the inauguration of the gospel message. To all these lands some of these "sojourners" will later be returning and so the wonderful story will get widely told.

Amazement and perplexity seized upon them all. Many were able only to inquire of one another what it all could mean. But there was another group (heteroi) whose irreverent rationalism suggested a natural explanation, which was easily shown to be unreasonable: the men were drunk on new wine. Rationalism is often very unreasonable.

(3) The explanation of the occurrence (verses 14–21) is made by Peter, backed by the presence of the eleven other apostles standing with him. He addresses himself to both the permanent and temporary residents of the city, calling for full attention to his words. He no doubt now speaks in the Aramaic language, which would be fairly well un-

drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day; 16 but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 [8]And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh:
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams:
18 Yea and on my [9]servants and on my [10]handmaidens in those days
Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

[8]Joel ii, 28 ff. [9]Gr. *bondsmen.* [10]Gr. *bondsmaidens.*

derstood by all. The charge of drunkenness is quickly disposed of, although we are, of course, to understand that in the whole report we have only a brief summary of the full speech of Peter. Nine A.M. is too early to be drunk, especially as Jews were in the habit of fasting until after that hour on a feast day, nine being an "hour of prayer" (cf. 3: 1).

The explanation is found in a prophecy of their Bible. "This which you now see is that which was spoken by the Holy Spirit through Joel" (2: 28ff). "The last days" were the days of judgment and of the Messiah. These days had now come. They continue through all the gospel age, to full consummation at the close of this age. Peter does not define, and probably he had little thought of their being lengthened into centuries. That is now aside from his point. They were experiencing the fulfillment of this prophecy. God will "pour forth" his Spirit "upon all flesh" without any distinction between professional prophet and plain man, with no reference to social standing or sex distinction: sons and daughters, old and young, male and female slaves, on them all God will pour his Spirit and they will prophesy. Remember that to prophesy means "to speak for God" and that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19: 10).

A part of the prophecy of Joel (verses 19, 20) had not yet been fulfilled, possibly was not to be literally under-

19 And I will show wonders in the heaven above,
And signs on the earth beneath;
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:
20 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the day of the Lord come,
That great and notable *day:*
21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name
of the Lord shall be saved.

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,
a man approved of God unto you by [1]mighty works and

[1]Gr. *powers.*

---

stood. But a beginning had been made. The new era had begun. The purpose of it all is that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is an age of salvation and the offer is to be universal; and God's Spirit is to multiply witnesses in all conditions of life.

We need not pause long here to suggest how wide of the mark it is to argue that since Pentecost witnessed the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" and since it fulfilled a prophecy of "*pouring* the Spirit out," therefore water baptism is for the purpose of symbolizing the gift of the Spirit and should be —or may be—by sprinkling or pouring. Jesus distinguished the two baptisms in his promise (1: 5); there is never a suggestion in Scripture that water baptism symbolizes the gift of the Spirit for witnessing, which is the gift before us; the whole room was filled with the manifestations of the Spirit and the people filled with himself; and *baptism* cannot in any event be *by* something else.

(4) The explanation had served as an introduction to *the first sermon in the* new order (*verses* 22–36). At first Peter had addressed his hearers as men, now as "men of Israel," men of the covenants, promises, hopes, men of Jehovah's special revelation. He goes straight to the point. In Jesus these men of God, as they claimed and thought, they and God had clashed and contradicted each other. God had approved Jesus of Nazareth, to them, by powers and wonders and signs which they knew because they had been

John Newport

wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; 23 him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of [2]lawless men did crucify and slay: 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.
25 For David saith concerning him,

[3]I beheld the Lord always before my face;
For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:
26 Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
Moreover my flesh also shall [4]dwell in hope:
27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades,
Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption.
28 Thou madest known unto me the ways of life;
Thou shalt make me full of gladness [5]with thy countenance.

29 Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of

[2]Or, *men without the law* See Rom. 2. 12.
[3]Ps. xvi. 8 ff.
[4]Or, *tabernacle*
[5]Or, *in thy presence*

---

done in the midst of them. Him these "men of Israel," under the permission of God whose wise foreknowledge had planned it all, had crucified and slain, using to destroy God's Messiah, sent for them, the hands of Romans who were men without and outside the Law of Israel. They had collaborated with heathen in opposing their covenant God at the climax of their covenant relation. Then God came in again to contradict them and raised Jesus from death, loosing the pangs with which death held him while at the same time it was thrusting him forth as in birth. For death could not hold him. David had foreseen this. The quotation is from Psalm 16: 8ff. The words cannot possibly apply to David himself, Peter says, now addressing his hearers as "brethren." He died and was still in his tomb there near them, long ago completely decayed. David was speaking for God and in confidence looked forward to One, the fruit

the fruit of his loins [5]he would set *one* upon his throne:
31 he foreseeing *this* spake of the resurrection of the Christ,
that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see
corruption. 32 This Jesus did God raise up, [6]whereof we all
are witnesses. 33 Being therefore [7]by the right hand of God
exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of
the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see
and hear. 34 For David ascended not into the heavens:
but he saith himself,

[8]The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
35 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

[5]Or, one *should sit* [6]Or, *of whom* [7]Or, *at* [8]Ps. cx. 1.

---

of his loins, the Christ whose soul could not remain in the place of spirits that are separated from their bodies while the bodies decay. God raised up this Jesus, fulfilling David's prophecy. Peter and his associates were his witnesses, even of his resurrection. He had been exalted by the right hand of their God and from his Father had got the authority to give the Holy Spirit. "This," says Peter, "is what you are seeing and hearing today."

No, again he takes up the argument, David had not gone into the heavens (*i. e.*, in his body) as is clearly involved in the psalm quoted. And he did not expect to, for in the 110th psalm he represents Jehovah as addressing David's Lord, and inviting him to sit on his right hand while his enemies are subdued. There he sits today in power. Boldly Peter calls all the house of Israel to take as safely established in the Word of God and in full testimony that God has taken this Jesus whom they crucified and made him both Lord and Messiah. Thus he drives home on these "devout men" that in Jesus, at the climax of all their covenant with God, they have directly, terribly set themselves squarely in the face of God. He has said nothing directly of the future of his hearers, either in hell or in heaven. He has driven home the awful fact of present antagonism between them and God. Jesus is alive and permanently at God's right hand. In him the issue between them and God must be settled. It is a present contradiction that he has

36 Let [a]all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of

[a]Or, *every house*

---

set up for them. The terrible fact for every unbelieving sinner is that in Jesus he and God are in conflict.

(5) At this point the Spirit, about whom Peter has been speaking, shows that he has been speaking through Peter and he manifests his work in the hearers (*verses* 37–41).

Peter's last words, "whom ye crucified," went straight home. It is a very strong Greek word with which Luke tells that they were "pricked in their heart." It is touching to see how these men who a few weeks before had called down upon themselves and their children the blood of Jesus now turn with pleading to the humble followers of Jesus as "brethren," to tell them what to do. It is very important that Peter's reply be understood to include all that is recorded through *verse* 40, and not to be limited to *verse* 38. We ought also to take careful note of their question. It is simply, "What shall we do?" To what end, they do not say. They have been shown to be in direct conflict with God, and the wicked murderers of Jesus, their Christ. How can they get right with God and wash out the stain of murder and the blindness of rejecting the Messiah?

First of all they are told to *repent;* to change their personal attitude toward Jesus Christ. This will involve sorrow, which they already feel, but the basal idea is to change the mind, and so to change the conduct. Their attitude toward God and toward life had been wrong. This must now be changed. The word for being sorry is different, and is not used in the imperative as is the word here. But they must show their change of attitude and their full acceptance of Jesus as the Christ and Saviour by being bap-

Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. 40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted

---

tized in his name—the name of Jesus Christ, thus in faith acknowledging Jesus as Christ. This whole change of attitude is with a view of removing their sins. Symbolically baptism shows this, actually it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin; experientially it is by regeneration that one puts away the old man and puts on the new. Pictorially all this is set forth in baptism, as is the death and resurrection of Jesus which Peter had so stressed in his sermon. On the basis of forgiveness of sins thus secured they must openly profess faith in Jesus. Not only are they to accept Christ, one has suggested, but they must also join Christianity. Keep in mind that it is not the mere fact of personal salvation these men are seeking, but the righting of their lives.

The third item of Peter's answer looks to these men joining the body of Jesus' witnesses. They were to receive the *free gift* of the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Spirit, in the passage from Joel, and in numerous passages in Isaiah, contemplated his coming upon all Jehovah's servants. We must distinguish the "gift of the Holy Spirit" here from the "gifts" of the Spirit in 1 Cor. 12–14. There it is special powers conferred by the Spirit. Here it is the full giving of the Spirit by God, the gift being the Spirit himself.

His great function, as we have seen, and the function immediately pressing in Acts is empowering for witness. So Peter insists that "as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him" shall be witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit. And this was the way in that early church. It is the only true way in every church.

One other point is so important that "with many other words" Peter testifies to its demand and exhorts unto it. These men must commit themselves to clean living, must

them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. 41 They then [10]that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and [1]fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

[10]Or, *having received* [1]Or, *in fellowship*

save themselves from the crookedness of their own generation.

There were three thousand who received this word as the way out for themselves and were "therefore" baptized. Whether they were all baptized that very day we are not told, nor does it seem important that we shall know. Nothing appears to the contrary. The time has passed when there is any need among informed men to show the possibility of baptizing so great a number. That there were difficulties is obvious enough, but only ignorant men would any longer oppose them as prohibitory. Luke had talked with men who were there.

(6) The Propagation—The ordering of the new life is reported in a condensed paragraph (*verses* 42–47).

They were energetic in it, *applied their strength to* is the exact meaning. Four items are mentioned. "The apostles' teaching" is their instruction, which would be in the life of Jesus, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the meaning of both to the new life. Steadfast continuance in the "apostles' doctrine" (A. V.) does not mean repeating formulas but learning what they had to teach. In *fellowship* was not merely sentimental but was the cultivation of spiritual partnership, of unity of spirit. "The breaking of bread" is an expression employed in Luke and Paul of the Lord's Supper. Thus they emphasized in this ordinance the divine source of support and growth for the new life. "The prayers" on which "they laid themselves out" probably included private prayer, but we must certainly think of prayer together, and possibly the Jewish prayer hours of the temple would also be included.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders
and signs were done through the apostles[2]. 44 And all that
believed were together, and had all things common; 45 and
they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to
all, according as any man had need. 46 And day by day,
continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and
breaking bread at home, they took their food with glad-
ness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having
favor with all the people. And the Lord added [3]to them
day by day those that [4]were saved.

[2]Many ancient authorities add *in Jerusalem; and great fear was upon all.*
[3]Gr. *together.*
[4]Or, *were being saved*

The effect of such living was a reverent fear upon "every soul," and many wonders and signs wrought by the apostles. Luke emphasizes God's part in the miracles by the striking phrase, "they got to be through the apostles." This reverence in the whole city gave the believers freedom from persecution for a time and the church had opportunity for development and adjustment.

All the believers were united and had all things (emphatically all) common. It was not communism, nor a general distribution of goods. The tenses are imperfect. The sales of real estate and of personal property were made by the owners from time to time and the distribution was made on the basis of need as the need developed. The great number of "sojourners" in their company in part accounts for this, and the fact that the first converts included so largely the poor. Conditions were abnormal in Jerusalem. This method of dealing with them appears again in chapter 4.

This harmony continued with steadfast earnestness. They worshiped in the temple, but "broke bread" from house to house (rather than "at home"). They were full of praise at home and abroad and in all their domestic as well as public life. The result was "favor with all the people."

The Lord Jesus was fulfilling his assurance of being with them and was adding to them day by day those who were being saved, as they were saved from day to day.

3 Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. 2 And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which

---

The present tense has direct reference to repetition in the succession of men who were saved. The controversy between "should be saved" and "already saved" has no place here. This distinction was not in Luke's mind. The reading "to the church" in the Authorized Version is not correct. No exact translation can be given. Literally, it is "to the same" and the meaning is, one thinks, to the united company.

Such is the record of the first day of witnessing in the Christian church under the power of the Holy Spirit; and such the picture of the new life in Christ Jesus in that church.

2. The Spirit's Work Arouses Opposition. 3: 1—4: 31.

In the summary account of the Christian life and work of the Jerusalem church "signs and wonders" are mentioned. The reverent fear which the spiritual life imposed and the general popular favor are mentioned, too. Thus the church had free opportunity for growth for a time. But the opposition to God's way, which sent Jesus to the cross, would not long be still while the Holy Spirit was working.

(1) A miracle produces a fresh sensation (3: 1–11).

This example of miraculous power is selected from the "many" because of the part it played in the development of the work of the church.

Peter and John, good Jews none the less for being the Christian leaders, were going up to the temple for the three o'clock prayer hour. Luke is fond of pointing out how the Holy Spirit produces opportunities by "fortunate" meetings (cf. Luke 2: 26ff, 38f, etc.). There was a man forty years of age, all his life lame and now a confirmed beggar with an established stand at one of the temple gates, to

is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into
the temple; 3 who seeing Peter and John about to go into
the temple, asked to receive an alms. 4 And Peter, fasten-
ing his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. 5 And
he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from
them. 6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but
what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ
of Nazareth, walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand,

---

which it was the custom for him to be carried daily. This "Beautiful Gate" is not so named in any other known writer and need not be exactly located. Perhaps Luke means to indicate that he had a good stand for begging. Such positions are much used in Europe and the East for this purpose. The beggar was just being put in position as the apostles were about to enter, and he solicited them.

Peter was led to use the opportunity. He and John both turned a piercing gaze upon the man and commanded him to look directly at (literally *into*) them. The man gave full heed, expecting to get something. They had nothing, just why we cannot say, but certainly not because the Lord's ministers were now under any monkish vow of poverty, nor because the church had a communistic treasury and the individuals had not even pocket change. Although seriously suggested by some, such explanations are wholly unworthy. Peter used two words: "Silver and gold I do not *control;* but what I hold, that I give to thee." He used three names for his Lord by whose personal authority (name) he commanded the man to walk about, **Jesus, Christ, the Nazarene.** And the numerous names for the Lord in this paragraph constitute a striking study (cf. for a similar group, John 1: 35–51). The beggar must have seen Jesus and would know much about him. He was now declared to be the Messiah, and able to help. Peter did not stop with speech but grasped (not merely *took*) him by the hand and raised him. The whole account has the dramatic character we know so well in Mark, who was so closely associated with Peter, and some words and phrases of the street. Luke must have had it straight from blunt Peter himself. So we read that

and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. 8 And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the [5]porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12 And when Peter saw it, he answered

[5]Or, *portico*

---

instantly the man's "goers" and ankles were made firm. He responded with mingled eagerness and caution. Having jumped up, he stood, and then walked about, and then went on with them into the temple court, leaping and praising God. Naturally all the people in the temple courts saw him in his now hilarious demonstration and they noted carefully that this was the one who begged at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were struck with wonder and amazement at what had "happened" to him. They had become somewhat accustomed to such cures by Jesus, but such as this was not expected of the followers of Jesus, and even he had not healed this man. The man was holding on to Peter and John, and so the people, more than astonished, ran together before them. So easily do people grow excited over a physical benefit and a material marvel. This beggar had received not what he sought but far more. The church has always far more to give needy men than that which they seek and, in our day, complain if they do not get. But something better yet Peter had, not for this man only, but for all the excited throng.

(2) Peter's interrupted explanation (3: 12—4: 3) presents this. He takes advantage of the sensation to preach Christ. That is the business of Christ's witnesses. Missionaries frequently follow this method. It can be used more than it is. When we get people aroused it is time

unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this [6]man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his [7]Servant Jesus; whom ye

[6]Or, *thing*
[7]Or, *Child* See Mt. 12. 18; Is. 42. 1; 52. 13; 53. 11.

---

to tell them the important thing. Peter's address follows the same general line as that on Pentecost. He makes the same points about the power of the risen, active Jesus of Nazareth; supports them by the same appeal to personal witness and Old Testament teaching. The use of the Bible by the New Testament speakers and writers deserves careful study and emulation. This address has in it more of the element of appeal to repentance and rather more of sympathy than the first one.

It begins with a deft shifting of interest from Peter and John to their Lord as the real cause of the cure (verses 12–16), during which the idea of God and these people being in antagonism is strongly urged.

Peter answered back to the people, addressing them, as in 2: 22, as "men of Israel" or "Gentlemen Israelites." He asks why they wonder at this deed. Such things, as all miracles, detached from their source and their purpose are irrational and truly amazing. To Peter, related as he was to the power and purpose of God in Christ Jesus, here was nothing so extraordinary. The modern skepticism concerning miracles grows largely out of missing this relation. Neither Jesus nor his followers were fakirs or mere wonder-workers. "Or why," Peter adds next, "are you at us gazing as if by private power or piety we had brought about his walking?"

How shrewdly does Peter now speak of God by that descriptive phrase that brings up the sources of all Jewish history and hope. This "God of our fathers" glorified, in this act, his Servant Jesus. The "our," while belonging to the current phrase, still connected Peter and John closely

delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. 14 But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, 15 and killed the [8]Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; [9]whereof we are witnesses. 16 And [10]by faith in his name hath his name made this man strong, whom ye

[8]Or, *Author* [9]Or, *of whom* [10]Or, *on the ground of*

---

with their hearers. The term Servant—rather than Son—is the right one here and brings forward Isaiah (chapters 42ff), the great prophet of the Messiah. God glorified Jesus. That is the point. Compare John 2: 11, where this use of miracles is mentioned in connection with Jesus' first miracle. This Servant whom God had glorified the Jews "delivered up," and disowned him before Pilate (Luke 23) after he had decided to release him. Again Peter charges that the Jews used the heathen to kill their Messiah (cf. 2: 23). You (emphatic) not only rejected the Messiah, the Holy and Righteous One, but asked that a man who was a murderer be given you as a favor in his stead; instead of the Prince of life you chose a destroyer of life, a taker of temporal life for the Giver of spiritual life. There is a clear difference in the Greek between the two conceptions of life. Indeed, three ideas are distinguished, physical life (*bios*), personal life (*psuchē*), and spiritual life (*zoē*). It is the last that is used of "the Prince of life." Prince here is file-leader, or guide. But God raised him from the dead. Luke does not report this point as elaborated here, possibly because of the full report in chapter 2 (see at 2: 24ff).

Again Peter announces himself and John as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

Here, then, is the explanation of the healing. It was not mere power, nor human piety, but authority that had worked here. The name of Jesus here stands, as in the Bible generally, for his personality. Men who professed to work wonders did so by the use of some cryptic word or some name of God. Peter says there is no secret or trick about this miracle. It is the living Jesus of Nazareth, now with

behold and know: yea, the faith which is through him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18 But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the

---

God, and mighty, who responds to faith in his name (*i. e.*, in himself). He reiterates the element of faith but does not say whether it is the faith of the man or of the apostles. The account shows that it was in both him and them. It was more than a mere healing of the man's ankles: by faith he has been completely healed. The word here used means either spiritually saved or, in a general sense, cured.

Peter now turns to appeal (*verses* 17–26). But the people and their rulers, who had led them on, had acted in ignorance; and God by all his prophets had announced beforehand that his Messiah, whom he would send, would suffer and so, by fulfilling these prophecies they had afforded proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. These prophecies ought to have taught and warned but the people were ignorant. Ignorance did not excuse but did so far mitigate as to make possible a merciful offer of repentance. Thus Paul says (1 Tim. 1: 13) that he obtained mercy because his persecution of the church was in ignorance. If his course had been willful, no repentance would have been possible to him. Hence Peter calls on them to repent and turn about (change personal attitude and conduct) with a view to having their sins expunged. The figure is that of erasing, or wiping off. The Roman Catholic reading, "do penance," for repent, is not a possible rendering of the Greek. Peter's adding *turn about* shows that repentance includes something more than change of conduct, and deeper.

A further objective in their repentance was that seasons of restoration might come from the presence of the Lord (Jehovah), and he might send the Christ appointed for the

Lord; 20 and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus: 21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old. 22 Moses indeed said, [1]A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, [2]like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. 23 [3]And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days. 25 Ye are the sons

[1]Dt. xviii. 15. [2]Or, *as* he raised up *me* [3]Dt. xviii. 19.

Jews, now declared to be Jesus. The passage is difficult, but apparently Peter is thinking of Jesus coming, the second time, to give to the Jews a new era of prosperity and blessing, now so long expected, and deferred because of sin. They had rejected him when he came, but God's promises will be fulfilled when the fit times come for setting-up-in-order all the things God talked of through his holy prophets from the beginning of the (Jewish?) age. Meantime, heaven must receive him. (Cf. ch. 1: 11; Rom. 11: 25–32). Also, meantime, these seasons wait on the repentance of the Jews, and of other sinners as well, for see 2 Peter 3: 9; Rom. 2: 4; Heb. 10: 13, etc. Peter's direct appeal is to Moses, the first "prophet" who predicted that God would raise up another prophet as he raised Moses up (cf. Deut. 18: 15, 19). To him absolute obedience must be given on pain of utter extirpation of the disobedient soul from the chosen people. The warning is very bold and very severe. From Samuel on, all the prophets, as many as talked to the people for God, passed on the announcement of these days. Here Peter is reflecting the teaching of Jesus, especially as recorded in Luke 24 to the two on the way to Emmaus, and to the Ten and others in the upper room.

Now these Jews here before Peter are the sons, descendants, or spiritual children, of the prophets (especially of the prophetic message) and of the covenants of the fathers,

of the prophets, and of the covenant which God [4]made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, [5]And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his [6]Servant, **sent him to bless you** in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

4 And as they spake unto the people, [7]the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon

[4]Gr. *covenanted.*
[5]Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; xxviii. 14.
[6]Or, *Child* See Mt. 12, 18; Is. 42. 1; 52. 13; 53. 11.
[7]Some ancient authorities read *the chief priests.*

---

beginning with Father Abraham. These covenants looked to the blessing of all the families of the earth (Gen. 12: 1–3; cf. Exodus 19: 5, 6). Now Jesus is that prophetic Servant, God's great promised Prophet, and he is raised up for the Jews first, sent to them with blessing (participle) which must be personally received, for it consists in turning *each one* from his sins. This is a very powerful appeal. Present repentance has been prepared **for by a long age of revelation** and holds a place in God's plans for all the future, even has a bearing on the time of the Lord's second coming. When Peter spoke of the Saviour being sent to the Jews first he hardly had Paul's clear conviction of an immediate extension to Gentiles. He probably did not think of personal duty to Gentiles at all. He did understand that it was God's plan to send the Messiah's gospel to Gentiles, but had hardly worked out, or been led into, any plan for that as yet.

From 4: 1 we learn also that John had part in the explanation. They are not allowed to press home the invitation fully. For they are now to have a first taste of persecution. They are now arrested, and by a large and distinguished company. There were the priests, possibly the chief priests (the manuscripts differ, but in *verse* 23 it is made clear), the head officers in charge of order and arrangements in the temple and who would ordinarily not attend to such a matter in person, and the Sadducees (*i. e.*, probably the leaders of that powerful party). These were

them, 2 being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now eventide. 4 But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

---

largely the same men who had led on the mob against Jesus. The Sadducees were the aristocratic and rationalistic party among the Jews, and because of this and of their friendly attitude toward Roman rule they commanded the confidence and favor of the Roman authorities. All unbelieving Jews would object to the preaching of Jesus by his followers, but we have seen how they were restrained until now. Things had come to such a pass they could endure it no longer. These uneducated men without any training as scribes and with no authority from the religious courts and councils had no business teaching the people, as they had now been doing for some time. Worst of all, they were teaching in Jesus as a concrete example the doctrine of resurrection which the Sadducees utterly denied, and their whole teaching centered in the hope of life after death. No, this must be endured no longer. Here was this lame man declared to be healed by the power of a risen man, and that man Jesus, only a few weeks ago put to death to stop his pestiferous movement. As it was already evening, they were placed in the custody of some officer, or officers, until the next day. Besides, the crowd was sympathetic with the prisoners and delay would do no harm.

(3) But the purpose of the miracle was gained (4: 4). It had not been wrought for its own sake, nor for the sensation. It was to help the man. Even more, it was a means of preaching Jesus. It had given a great opportunity for that. And Luke, who loves to record successes, tells us that many of the hearers believed the Word and that the number of the men now got to be some five thousand, not to reckon women and young people. The miracle had served its purpose. It is a shame when healings are made an end

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. 7 And when they had set them in the

---

in themselves and that in the name of Christ, and when they are not subordinated to the making of spiritual believers in the Redeemer of souls, or lives. That the central feature of a religion should be physical cures is a tragic perversion of the very essence of true Christianity.

We shall read no more of definite numbering of the church members. They are getting too numerous, and persecutions, as well as other reasons, will make it wise no longer to give statistics. It is always easy to stress statistics overmuch. Luke is eager to record numbers, but not the number.

(4) The explanation is completed in court next day (4: 5–12).

This meeting of their Sanhedrin was looked upon by the authorities as of unusual importance. They had been watching this new movement grow. It was time to put an end to it. They were all there, rulers, elders, scribes; Annas, the aged and honored high priest who, although officially displaced by the Romans with his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was still looked up to as the religious head by many, and whose venerable presence had sanctioned the condemnation of Jesus, first of all. He was on hand, with Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all the rest of the men of the family connection. John is probably the same as Jonathan, a son of Annas. Alexander is not known beyond this mention. The Apostle John was personally acquainted in this circle (John 18: 15f), and could tell Luke the names and rank. The "rulers" were the official representatives of the people; the "elders" were men whose age and service gave them influence and position in the religious court made up of about seventy, in whose hands the Romans left all purely religious questions; the "scribes" were the Bible teachers and some of them were members of the court.

midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders, 9 if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, [8]by what means this man is made whole;

[8]Or, *in whom*

The assembly thus solemnly set, the two prisoners were stood in the midst of the semi-circle, in the center of which the president's chair was placed, which they would face. They now sought to learn from the apostles in what power or what name they did this deed.

Peter's answer fulfills both Jesus' promise and his instructions for such cases. On the night when Jesus had closed his public ministry he was talking to the Twelve of the future, and said (Luke 21: 12ff), "they shall lay their hands on you . . . and bring you before kings and governors for my name's sake. It shall turn out to you for witnessing. Fix it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to withstand or contradict." On another occasion, as reported by Luke (12: 12), Jesus had given the same instructions with the explanation in these words: "For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say" (cf. Matt. 10: 20). On this first persecution they realize exactly what Jesus had said. They used the occasion not for defense but for witnessing. These great men would not go to hear these "unlearned, private" men preach Jesus, but here in court the apostles had their chance. "Filled with the Holy Spirit" they gave their answer. The Spirit fills the witnesses as needed. Every faithful and true witness knows this experience. The address is formal and respectful but remarkably skillful. The inquisitors had called the healing simply "this." Peter brings out the true quality of the deed. It was a good work for an afflicted human being, whereby he had been made sound. Much depends upon how you name a thing. If the rulers want to know

10 be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in [9]him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 He is [10]the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. 12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

[9]Or, *this* name [10]Ps. cxviii. 22.

---

in whom (preferable to *by what means*) it had been done, they have no concealment but are glad to tell all the rulers and also all the people of Israel. Now Peter makes his usual points with kind, unflinching directness. It is in the name of Jesus, Messiah, the Nazarene that this man "has taken his stand here in your presence whole." They have him for exhibit and witness.

By telling the rulers they crucified Jesus and God raised him from the dead, Peter sets up the antagonism by which he seeks to drive conviction home. This Stone, provided by God, these builders of God's house had rejected and thrown out into the graveyard. God had recovered him and now he has come to be the chief cornerstone of God's building. He is drawing his figure from Psalm 118: 22, and probably thinking of the words later recorded in Matt. 16: 18. Paul will later speak of it as a new building (Eph. 1 and 2). And salvation is in this Name alone. Here is a tacit invitation to the rulers to seek deliverance from their sin of contradicting God in the Christ. For there is no other name that has been given among men in which it is necessary for you (note how personal he now makes it) to be saved.

Peter and John are allowed to go no further. Instead of defending an irregular healing they are charging a murder which was also blasphemous and destructive of all religious and national hope for Israel, save by the way of repentant appeal to the murdered Jesus, now the living Christ. The court will hear no more.

13 Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable [1]miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather

[1]Gr. *sign.*

---

(5) The miracle is confessed and rejected (*verses* 13–22).

Seeing the boldness of the men and comprehending that they were men without technical rabbinical training and with no official standing as teachers (private, not *ignorant*, men), the rulers were amazed. Then they took careful knowledge of them, that they had been associated with "the Jesus" in question. And there stood the man who had been healed. They were not able to *refute* the explanation. The Greek word here is exactly that in Luke 21: 15. Conference was needed. Peter and John were sent out, and likely the healed man, although they may have overlooked him and he may have been the first source of our report of the conference. The case was too plain and the fact was known to everybody. Denial was impossible. That would only make them ridiculous. Still the work must be stopped. They would prohibit their talking (ordinary speech, even) any longer to any one of mankind (very strong) on this Name. Having called Peter and John in, they charged them absolutely not to make a sound or to teach in the name Jesus. How little did they know of the power with which they were dealing! Peter and John knew better. They said that they would leave their judges to settle the question, as

than unto God, judge ye: 20 for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. 21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done. 22 For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this [2]miracle of healing was wrought.

23 And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them. 24 And they, when they heard it, lifted up

[2]Gr. *sign.*

---

a question in ethics, whether they ought to obey God or the rulers. It must be settled "in the sight of God," and so Peter and John would not be amenable to their decision; for they were driven by an inner, compelling impulse to talk about what they saw and heard in their own experience. A great experience is imperious (cf. 2 Cor. 4: 13; Psalm 116: 10).

This was not at all satisfactory, but the facts, the people generally and these gently defiant men were too much for them. With some threats they dismissed them, for all the people were praising God for what had occurred.

(6) We have now to see how this persecution was turned to good account (*verses* 23–31).

Peter and John went at once to their friends, doubtless assembled in prayer for them, and reported the prohibition and warnings. It is a notable thing we read now: "with one accord," or "with-common-impulse" (one word), "they lifted up their voice to God, and said." But the prayer itself is most remarkable. The word of address is one rarely used in the New Testament. It is that from which we get the term "despot," but has no bad sense attached to it. It is "Sovereign Master," the one who made and controls all things and is not dependingly responsible to anyone. The term is fitting here where they are thinking how God had predicted men's conduct and used even the most vicious plans and deeds of men to promote the ends of his grace and righteousness. *Verse* 24 uses the language of Psalm 146: 6.

their voice to God with one accord, and said, O [3]Lord, [4]thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: 25 [5]who by the Holy Spirit, *by* the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say,

[6]Why did the [7]Gentiles rage,
And the peoples [8]imagine vain things?
26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
And the rulers were gathered together,

Against the Lord, and against his [9]Anointed: 27 for of a truth in this city against thy holy [10]Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the [7]Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, 28 to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel

[3]Gr. *Master.*
[4]Or, *thou* art *he that did make*
[5]The Greek text in this clause is somewhat uncertain.
[6]Ps. ii. 1, 2.
[7]Gr. *nations.*
[8]Or, *meditate*
[9]Gr. *Christ.*
[10]Or, *child* See marginal note on ch. 3. 13.

The clause introducing the quotation from Psalm 2: 1f, in *verse* 25, is rather obscure in the Greek and the reading is not certain. The translation seems fairly to render it. That God spoke through the Holy Spirit using David as mouthpiece is the meaning of all the readings, the exact form making no difference therefore. The psalm quoted is one of the most clear and definite of Messianic Scriptures, with a wonderful sweep of ideas. The word translated "Anointed" is the word Christ, and is derived from the pouring of oil of consecration on the head of priests and kings, *e. g.*, when Samuel anointed David, setting him apart as God's chosen one for king of Israel (1 Sam. 16: 13).

The prayer proceeds to apply various items from the quotation. Right there in Jerusalem it had been fulfilled. Gentiles and Jews had confederated against God's consecrated Servant, Jesus, whom God had anointed with the Holy Spirit, specifically at his baptism. Kings and rulers combined, Herod and Pilate. And yet they could only carry out what God's hand and plan had predetermined. How inspiring to feel the grip of sovereign purpose that holds

foreordained to come to pass. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy [1]servants to speak thy word with all boldness, 30 while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy [2]Servant Jesus. 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were

[1]Gr. *bondservants.* [2]Or, *child* See marginal note on ch. 3. 13.

---

the reins on even the enemies of God when one is also gripped in grace so that he is in harmony with the plan of the Sovereign! Here was a good foundation for the petition. They say not merely "now," but "concerning the present matters." And "Lord" here is a different word from that of *verse* 24, and refers to his relation to them as Master. They ask God to take a look at the threats, but they do not ask him to prevent them. That they leave to God. Persecutions have been predicted. The only concern they have is for their one great calling to witness for Jesus. If God will guard that, with or without persecution, they are content. They want every form of courage needed to talk (not formal preaching is suggested) the message of God, and for God to back it up with healing and other "signs" in the name of his holy Servant, Jesus. Then all will be well whatever comes. They can do nothing without God. If he shows he is with them they ask no more. The answer was immediate. The place is shaken, by earthquake, wind or some other force; they are filled, all of them, with the Holy Spirit consciously making his presence known, and the desired boldness is given and they went on (imperfect) talking the message. They have had a taste of persecution and it has not hindered the gospel. More will follow, but they can meet it.

3. We Have Now to Face a Problem of Poverty in the New Order. 4: 32—5: 11.

And it has been made a problem in interpretation and in Christian socialism. We ought to try to see in the account the plain facts and to read out of them the principles

gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one *of them* said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus[3]: and great grace was upon them all. 34 For neither was there

[3]Some ancient authorities add *Christ*.

---

inherent and not to impose on the record facts and principles belonging only to modern social conditions. One thinks that very deep and thorough-going principles are revealed and at work in the conditions so briefly presented in Luke's account.

(1) The spirit of the common life (*verses* 32–35).

The order of *verse* 32 in Greek is such as to emphasize strongly the complete harmony of the believers: "Of the multitude of those that believed there was heart and soul one." This unity rested on the ground of a common faith in the Lord Jesus which constituted them a new community in society and in this the family feeling of common interest was dominant. Without exception, not one of them laid personal claim to any one of the material things under his possession. Exclusive personal ownership of material goods is essentially irrational, and the Holy Spirit caused this first church unanimously to accept this principle. As no man brought anything into this world nor can take anything out of it, the most he can ever do is to come into temporal possession of it and for a few years to use, or abuse, or administer it. These early Christians were led to see the principle of stewardship and the duty of administering in material things rather than to undertake for their few years personally to appropriate them as private, exclusive property. They did not surrender the responsibility of control and administration, throwing all into a common estate, or a common fund. That would be to shirk the duty of stewardship and to lose the discipline of administration. These two principles are of permanent validity and at the

any among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

---

foundation of the Christian idea of property: the negative idea of no absolute appropriation in ownership, because all is God's and put here for the good of all men; the positive principle of stewardship in acquiring, holding, administering and releasing goods.

Just how the principles are to be applied in various circumstances will remain to be determined. We have already noted the exceptional conditions in Jerusalem (2 44f). There are many who think these early Christians were unwise in even their modified communism and support the claim by the fact that this method was later abandoned there and not adopted elsewhere—although some wrongly suppose that 2 Thessalonians 3: 10 suggests such a condition in Thessalonica. It seems far more probable that it was other circumstances that led to other application of the principles later, and in all other places. Always the principle remains; for Christians all things should be common, but personal responsibility is not thereby to be surrendered. What each man has is to be made common by him voluntarily, and not by compulsion, and not as a rule turned over to somebody else to administer. This state of affairs had an inspiring effect, for the apostles gained a fresh accession of power and the favor of God was obviously upon them all. For there was no want where as many as had become owners of houses or lands sold them and brought the prices realized to the apostles for distribution, not on a basis of equality but for actual need. The tenses here indicate that this was an occasional course of action and not a once for all act.

(2) An example is given of one who acts thus (*verse* 36f). His name was Joseph; his home in Cyprus; by tribe a Levite, and therefore connected with the temple service.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of [4]exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, 37 having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 and kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Anani-

[4]Or, *consolation* See Lk. 2. 25; ch. 9. 31; 15. 31; 2 Cor. 1: 3-7, in the Gr.

But his gracious spirit and helpfulness won him a "nickname" among the apostles, Barnabas in their native Aramaic; *Huios Paraklescōs* in Greek, Son of Encouragement in English. His name is made on the same word stem as that given to the Holy Spirit by Jesus in John 14–16, and translated "Comforter." It means one who can be called on in need and one who calls on others when they need it. It was high honor thus conferred on this Joseph, whom we meet here for the first time but shall later find justifying the compliment of his new name. He sold his Cyprus estate and brought "the proceeds" and laid it before the feet of the apostles. He was now stripped for the finest, freest spiritual service. Compare the rich ruler to whom Jesus offered a similar honor but who rejected it (Luke 18; Mark 10; Matt. 19).

(3) But over against this true exhibition of the spirit of Christian self-denial in fellowship we have an effort to play a double role (5: 1–10).

Ananias and his wife wanted the credit for a generosity which they lacked the faith and consecration to practice. They sold "a possession," land, as is seen from *verses* 3, 8. The text does not suggest that they even sold all they had. Now they divided the sale price and secretly laid away a part of it, while they pretended to lay it all at the apostles' feet, for the distribution. Ananias came alone. Peter discerned the hypocrisy and charged him with lying to the

as, why hath Satan *filled* thy heart to [5]lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? 4 While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. 6 And the [6]young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said Yea, for so much. 9 But Peter *said* unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have

[5]Or, *deceive* [6]Gr. *younger.*

Holy Spirit. He had dealt falsely not with men merely, but with God. It was the Holy Spirit who was suggesting these sales and gifts.

Peter's questions of Ananias confirm our interpretation of the facts as to the "common" life. While the land was unsold it was his, and even after it was sold the money was in his authority to give or to keep, even to divide. It was the lying effort to get credit for whole-hearted giving that constituted the sin. If all who lie in effect to the church officers and seek credit for giving more than they do should die at once, there would be a marked advance in the undertaking business. Would the officers of the average church all escape, or even the pastors? By this act the Holy Spirit shows for all time what he thinks of such hypocrisy, and he thinks no better of it that he now delays its punishment.

The immediate burial of Ananias was in accord with the customs of the time. That Sapphira was uninformed gives trouble only because Luke did not see fit to explain for us. It was some three hours later when she came in, and in answer to Peter's question sought to confirm the lie about the sale price. Peter had pronounced no judgment on Ananias. He had asked him "why he put this thing in his

buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. 10 And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people: and they were all with one accord in Solomon's [7]porch. 13 But of the rest durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified

[7]Or, *portico*

---

heart," pressing home on his conscience his personal responsibility and guilt, under the shock of which he fell and died. To Sapphira, Peter does speak the condemning word and she dies at his feet. Only a profound sense of speaking for God could lead to such judgments, and the event proved the truth of Peter's conviction.

It would seem that "the young men" (note article) were an organized body for service within the church.

(4) The effect of it all (*verse* 11) was great, reverent dread upon the entire church and upon all others who heard the facts. People dread the evident presence of God, and all the more if it is evidenced by unusual deaths. It is to be noted in this connection that Peter calls the Holy Spirit God (*verse* 4). "Spirit of the Lord" (*verse* 9) may be of Jehovah or of Jesus. It is hardly possible to say at just what stage Jesus came to be "the Lord" in the popular speech of the apostles.

4. Extending Success and Fresh Opposition. 5: 12–42.

(1) The growing power of the gospel (*verses* 12–16) was the result of this purging out of the leaven of hypocrisy. The most remarkable exercise of miraculous healing power recorded in Acts follows upon the death of the deceivers. (But cf. Acts 19: 11f.) This supernatural power was rarely employed in a punitive way (see chapters 8, 13), and then it was made to serve the advance of the spiritual benefits

them; 14 [8]and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women: 15 insomuch that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and [9]couches, that, as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might overshadow some one of them. 16 And there also came together the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

[8]Or, *and there were the more added* to them, *believing on the Lord*
[9]Or, *pallets*

---

of the gospel. The feeling that Peter's shadow "at the least" was needful for healing is in harmony with the usual dependence of men upon some physical symbol to stimulate faith. Not only did they crowd the open spaces with Jerusalem's sick on cots and pallets but from the cities in the neighborhood of Jerusalem they brought in sick folks and folks vexed (literally crowded) with unclean spirits. The human spirit either allows itself to be possessed by God's Spirit or by spirits of evil.

The unanimity of the believers is again mentioned, and the fact of their using Solomon's portico of the temple for a meeting place, so far did they disregard the commands and threats of the Sadducees and the rest of the Sanhedrin. The people got to be so afraid of them that no unbeliever dared join their company. The explanations are to be rejected that place the apostles in a class by themselves, whom all other believers feared and dared not associate with. The idea is foreign to the spirit of Christianity and would indicate a course to be condemned, not signally blessed, as here. Still the people set high store by them, and their growth was not only not hindered but increased, so that multitudes of both men and women were united with them by faith in the Lord. When the purity of the church and the obvious presence of the Lord in it make people afraid to join, then there is no way to prevent growth.

(2) A second imprisonment for the apostles (*verses* 17–18). The Sadducean sect could no longer abide this defiance of the apostles and this wonderful popularity of the gospel

17 But the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy, 18 and laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward. 19 But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said, 20 Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life. 21 And when they heard *this*, they entered into the temple about daybreak, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison-house to have them brought. 22 But the officers that came found them not in the prison; and they returned, and told, 23 saying, The prison-house we found shut in all safety, and the keepers standing at the doors: but when we had opened,

---

of the risen Jesus. Full of jealousy, led by the high priest (Annas, probably), they laid hands on them—not Peter and John alone this time, but the whole apostolic group. They placed them in the public prison—possibly with more of indignity than in 4: 3, although the case is not wholly clear.

(3) A trial delayed by an angel of the Lord (*verses* 19–25).

There would seem to be no ground for any of the "natural" explanations of this deliverance. An angel of the Lord (here I think Jesus must be understood) opened the prison and delivered the apostles, and told them to go and take their stand in the temple and continue talking to the people all the aspects of this spiritual life. The Lord was going to use his temple for his message, at will. They obeyed, of course, beginning at daybreak, when already plain people would be stirring.

The ease-loving Sadducees would be much later getting out and summoning all the elements of the "grand council of the children of Israel," for they wanted now to make complete work of this troublesome movement. Ready at length, they sent to the prison for the culprits. The head temple officer did not go himself, but sent some subordinates while he waited with the Sanhedrin.

He and the other leaders were in distress when the officers came back with a detailed account of the complete secur-

we found no man within. 24 Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed concerning them whereunto this would grow. 25 And there came one and told them, Behold, the men whom ye put in the prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people. 26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them, *but* without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men.

---

ity of the prison and still of the absence of the prisoners. This might have embarrassing influence on their present effort. In the midst of their perplexity somebody happening along reported to them, and the message was so strikingly disconcerting that Luke throws it into direct quotation.

(4) The apostles and the Holy Spirit witness before the court (*verses* 26–32). (Cf. John 15: 26f.)

The chief officer now goes with his subordinates and brings in the apostles "without violence." The people might stone them if any confusion were started, for the popularity of the apostles is now very great. Recall how the Pharisees, and Sadducees at times, were hindered by fear of the people from proceeding against Jesus.

The high priest speaks. He will not use the name of Jesus. Luke preserves a Hebrew form of expression in reporting him: "With a charge we charged you not to teach on this name and you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are planning to bring upon us the blood of this person." He is thoroughly contemptuous, so far as Jesus is concerned.

The apostles are very direct. They have but one word of defense, and that is testimony as well: "It is necessary to obey God as ruler rather than men." Then comes Peter's usual charge of the rulers antagonizing God in Jesus.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. 31 Him did God exalt [10]with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. 32 And we are witnesses[1] of these [2]things; [3]and *so is* the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them. 34 But there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the

[10]Or, *at*
[1]Some ancient authorities add *in him.*
[2]Gr. *sayings.*
[3]Some ancient authorities read *and God hath given the Holy Spirit to them that obey him.*

Jesus and his followers are in line with true Hebrew history, for "the God of our fathers" had raised him up when this body of rulers had slain him on a "stick of wood." This One God had lifted on high with his right hand to be Leader and Saviour with a view to his giving to Israel, his people (article) repentance and remission of sins. Here is the suggestion of appeal. "And we are witnesses of these matters, both we and the Holy Spirit." So had Jesus said repeatedly and we find the echoing of it in the words of the apostles repeatedly. The Holy Spirit God gave to the ones who obey him (Jesus) as ruler, and his supreme command is just this, to be his witnesses.

(5) Worldly advice from a great man (verses 33–39).

In the statement that words of the apostle "sawed them asunder," the word is not that of 2: 37. Here it was violent anger that led to wishing to destroy, "to obliterate," the apostles. But a Pharisee checked them. The Pharisees, so very prominent in the opposition to Jesus, had not yet as a party undertaken to suppress the church. A little later they did. This Gamaliel was the most noted and at the same time the most popular rabbi of his time, and especially powerful in his influence with the Pharisaical party. It is most interesting to find the teacher of Saul of Tarsus staying the persecuting rage of the Sanhedrin. The account of what followed after the apostles were temporarily excused from the

law, had in honor of all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while. 35 And he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men, what ye are about to do. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away *some of the* people after him: he also perished; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: 39 but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fight-

---

room may easily have come from Paul himself, although there would be other sources (*e. g.*, see 6: 7). Gamaliel is very solemn: "Gentlemen Israelites, look out for yourselves over these men and question what you are about to do." His advice is to "let them alone" on the opportunist theory that if their movement is of merely human origin "it will be overthrown," whereas if God is back of it, it would not be possible "to overthrow them." In support of his theory he cites the cases of two agitators whose movements had failed and gone to pieces. That of Theudas is not known beyond Luke's reference. Josephus names a Theudas who led a revolt against the Romans some fourteen years later than this time. Unless he is mistaken in his date he and Gamaliel have different uprisings in mind. It is wholly gratuitous to attribute error to Luke for within the now accepted date of the Acts such an error is out of the question. And at all events, Luke's reputation for accuracy quite surpasses that of Josephus.

The Judas cited by Gamaliel led a revolt in A.D. 6 against Jews paying any tax to a foreign power and from his movement came the recognized party of *Zealots* from whom Jesus got an apostle, Simon (cf. 1: 13). Hence Gamaliel argues it is safe to "stand away from these men." On the other hand he says, "you might even be found to be God-fighters." This

ing against God. 40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. 42 And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to [4]preach Jesus *as* the Christ.

[4]Gr. *bring good tidings of.* See ch. 13. 32; 14. 15.

---

compound word vigorously expresses just that antagonism which Peter in all his addresses has been establishing between these Jewish rulers and God.

(6) Beaten, threatened and honored (*verses* 40–42).

Gamaliel prevailed, and after beating them for their disobedience, the Sanhedrin again "charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

The conclusion, "therefore," is not logical but ethical. They left the Sanhedrin rejoicing that they had been counted worthy not only to suffer, but to suffer the shame of open flogging "in behalf of the Name." The Name is properly capitalized in the text. The name of Jehovah was held so sacred by the Hebrews that they never pronounced it. By making the Name, when applied to Jesus, a proper noun, the Christians very soon gave expression to their reverence for him as divine. Then his own use of the term (especially in John 14–16) gave ground for their feeling. Their joy on this occasion of their first actual shame in behalf of him shows how the apostles have now learned the beatitude of Matthew 5: 11f. Recall how Peter opposed the doctrine of the cross, in Matthew 16: 21ff, and how he writes of persecution in his epistles.

So far from heeding the charge of the persecutors, without cessation, "both in the temple and at home," or at the various homes, they daily continued "teaching" believers and "evangelizing," their message being that the Christ is Jesus. The order of the words in Greek is new here; "to preach the Christ Jesus." Up till now they have assumed Jesus to be known and have affirmed that he is the Messiah.

6 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the [5]Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said,

[5]Gr. *Hellenists.*

Here they assume the hope of the Messiah and affirm that he is to be found in Jesus. Note also that in this address Jesus has not been called the Nazarene. The practice varies in the New Testament throughout, but this later order grows in use. The first verse of chapter 6 informs us of the continued rapid growth, an item always dear to Luke to record.

5. Internal Dissension Met by Better Organization. 6: 1–6.

In the midst of their great spiritual prosperity we read of trouble in the church over food. As so frequently happens, it is those who live by the generosity of others who make complaint. There seems to be ground for the complaint that the widows of Jews born outside of Palestine were not treated so well in the daily distribution of goods —food and other things—as were the "Hebrews," those native to Palestine. It is not unnatural that "the Twelve" had retained so fully all the management within the church, but it was too much for them and is a warning to leaders at all times. We may recall how Moses was wearing his life away with details until his father-in-law suggested a plan by which **six** dozen men came to share his work. Not all leaders are as quick as Moses and the Twelve to see the wisdom of divided labor. We may learn, too, how the abounding presence of the Holy Spirit does not obviate the necessity for careful attention to all aspects of business. Even under the leadership of the Spirit we must sometimes learn by means of disagreeable murmurings.

The Twelve deal with the matter in a way that recognizes the rights and responsibilities of "the multitude of the disciples." Calling them all to conference, they point

It is not [6]fit that we should forsake the word of God, and [7]serve tables. 3 [8]Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we many appoint over this business. 4 But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaüs a proselyte of Antioch; 6 whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

[6]Gr. *pleasing.*
[7]Or, *minister to tables*
[8]Some ancient authorities read *But, brethren, look ye out from among you.*

---

out the unfitness of the Twelve leaving off the Word of God "to serve tables." This does not imply that they had personally done this service, but recognizes the present need for more personal supervision of this service than it had received; and this added duty the apostles could not assume. Some must be selected "for this need." Their selection was left to the whole body. Their number and characteristics were specified by the apostles. They must be men of good standing by common report of the believers, so as to give confidence in their conduct. They must be men full of the Spirit, so as to fulfill his ideas and ends. And they must be full of wisdom, because practical affairs call for skillful administration. The plan was pleasing to the whole multitude and they chose the seven accordingly.

It is to be noted that all seven have Greek names and one was not a Jew at all, but a heathen (Greek) convert to Judaism at Antioch and now, of course, a Christian. Thus they seem to be meeting fully the demands of the Hellenist element in the church. When the seven were thus set before them the apostles "prayed" and "layed their hands upon them," which is what we call ordination.

Now just what was done, and what was its significance? The answers in the commentaries and other books vary according to the ideas of church order and especially of the

ministry held by the authors. It has long been the custom to assume that they were "deacons," but, then, there is no agreement as to what a deacon is. It is to be recognized that the term is never in the New Testament applied to these seven. In the account of their appointment the base of the word deacon occurs, first in the complaint that Hellenist widows "were overlooked in the daily deacon-service" or "administration;" in the words of the apostles that it was not pleasing for them "to deaconize," or "serve," tables, and their call for men whom they might set over this "deacon-service." Hence the fitness of the word is obvious. They may very well be called deacons, or service committee would do.

But were they officers in the ministry looking to higher "orders," or were they laymen only? But for the fact that Stephen and Philip appear almost immediately as preachers and Philip later is known as "the evangelist" (21: 8), there would be no ground for the episcopal theory, and the whole account here is clearly against any idea of a new ministerial order, nor are deacons ever mentioned in a way clearly to suggest them as so thought of.

There is a further question: Were these officers permanent in the church and were their counterparts found in all churches? The immediate function for which they were designated soon disappeared, with the scattering of the church, and such an office is specifically mentioned in only one other church, Philippi (Phil. 1: 1). The characteristics required for deacons in 1 Timothy 3: 8ff assume a knowledge of the office and so do not define it. A good deal is made by some of the failure to mention the deacons in Acts 15. The whole question is now under discussion among biblical students and church historians. No really new light appears, and the traditional position stands.

The duties of the seven were to administer in material affairs so that the Twelve could "apply their strength to prayer and to the service of the word." We may legitimately conclude that such service of affairs as was re-

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

---

quired to free the ministry for "the service of the word" was assigned to the deacons. Some number had to be taken, and apart from special direction by the Holy Spirit, which does not appear here, Jewish minds would normally select either twelve or seven. One attaches no other importance to the number, although churches that would increase this number might well consider that this sufficed for the Jerusalem church with a membership of ten to fifteen thousand.

As for their ordination to the diaconate, we see that this was done here. We read no direction for its repetition, and no account of it. Silence leaves us free but the original example may fitly be followed. It is quite possible that it was the departure in setting up a new office that occasioned the laying on of hands. The whole question of ordination is in the New Testament very obscure and no authoritative rules can be taken from it.

6. Inroads on the Priests. Verse 7.

This new organization proved effective, for the increase of the Word of God was evidenced in multiplying the number of disciples in Jerusalem very greatly. Especially do we now for the first time read of "a great company of priests" who yielded obedience to the faith. This fact may help explain the determination of the authorities to enter upon a campaign of extermination of Christians. "The faith" here is not a body of doctrine, certainly it is not meant merely to say that the priests accepted a new creed. It is the doctrine and experience of faith salvation that was accepted.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great
wonders and signs among the people. 9 But there arose
certain of them that were of the synagogue called *the*
synagogue of the [9]Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of
the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, dispu-
ting with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to withstand
the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake. 11 Then

[9]Or, *Freedmen*

---

7. Stephen, "Full of Grace and Power," Witnesses in Death. 6: 8—8: 1.

(1) Learned scribes no match for Stephen's wisdom in the Spirit (6: 8–10).

Stephen was one of the seven and was evidently a man of exceptional vigor. "Full of grace and power," he wrought miracles that were great and was powerful with the people. Now there were many synagogues in Jerusalem. One of these was for freedmen Jews, "Libertines," and for Cyrenians and Alexandrians and for those who had come from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. For the form of statement seems designed to group all these as associated with the one synagogue, possibly the last two groups have a second. The "Libertines" were Roman Jews who began as captives under Pompey and were later liberated. Cyrene and Alexandria are in Egypt, where Jews were very numerous. Cilicia suggests Saul of Tarsus, and he was present. Possibly Stephen was a member of this same synagogue and so felt free to discuss his Christianity with its members.

Some of them (was Saul of the number?) stood forth in contention against Stephen, but found themselves unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

(2) Perjury in place of argument. (*verses* 11–15).

When men are set in their views and defeated in argument they become angry. These were extreme. They were wiser in procedure than the Jerusalem Sadducees had been. They began by winning the people away from sympathy with Stephen. They procured men who circulated stories of what

they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the counsel. 13 and set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law: 14 for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us. 15 And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

---

they said they had heard Stephen say, words that constituted blasphemy against Moses and, so, against God. Thus they "shook the people up" and aroused their "elders" and "scribes." They were then ready to seize him and bring him before the Sanhedrin. Now the Pharisees are aroused who had heretofore held aloof, and "the people" who have been friendly are now opposing. The procured witnesses are ready before the Sanhedrin with a specific charge of dangerous blasphemy. He had, they said, unceasingly blasphemed both the temple and the law of Moses; for they had heard Stephen say "that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us." That, in a deep, true sense, Stephen believed that Jesus would bring about transforming changes in the law and the temple worship his speech shows clearly. Just what he had said that constituted the basis of the charge we are not told.

We cannot fail to observe the close correspondence between the charges against Jesus and Stephen and the perversion of their words was probably similar. Again there is close resemblance in the manner of the Jews in dealing with the two. But Jesus makes no defense and no argument, while Stephen speaks at length. The flashing of Stephen's face which was noticed by "all that sat in the council" was due to the Holy Spirit, but may have expressed his anger at the injustice and his enthusiasm at being called on now to witness for Jesus before the chief

7 And the high priest said, Are these things so? 2 And he said,

body of his nation. He cannot have failed to compare his present position with that of Jesus when on trial.

In reply to the challenge of the high priest we have

(3) *Stephen's speech.* 7: 1–53.

The speech has many minor difficulties on which much time and energy have been expended. There are discrepancies with Old Testament records, but mainly these are merely additions for which Stephen had the support of tradition or of literature not now accessible. It is not impossible that Stephen made some slips in history or in interpretation. There is no reason for insisting on the infallible accuracy of everything he said. If he made slips Luke has simply preserved them in his record of what Stephen actually said. It is often said that the speech lacks order. It seems so only because it implies applications of its points of history without making them. It all proceeds toward the one point that comes out distinctly at the end, viz.: the history of Israel shows that God's purpose is often, indeed usually, missed by the people and that the people are thus constantly rejecting God's true representatives and missing redemption and deliverance. The supreme example of this is seen in the Son of man. All along Stephen is indirectly answering the charge of blasphemy against the law and the temple by showing the deeper nature of God's purpose and promise and by showing that the temple is relatively unimportant in the true worship of God. But these points he leaves to be seen by the hearers and does not stress them. His entire argument would doubtless be clearer if he had been allowed to apply it in detail to Jesus as he obviously meant to do. Saul of Tarsus later used Stephen's argument in addresses and in epistles.

We must now take up the speech of Stephen for such attention as space allows. He begins with polite dignity in words that show a man of culture, "Gentlemen, brothers

Brethren and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldæans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, *God* removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell: 5 and he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: and he promised that he would give it to him in possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child. 6 And God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, four hundred years. 7 And the nation to which they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt: and God was with

---

and fathers." "The God of glory" is a designation sometimes found in the Old Testament, not elsewhere in the New. That God did not immediately exalt Jesus to the glory of Messiahship in Palestine has its parallel in his dealing with Abraham to whom God gave "not a foot place" in it but sent his seed off for a stay of four hundred years in Egypt. This period is given in round numbers and there was no need for Stephen to analyze the time into so much time of actual bondage, so much prior to that, so much in the wilderness, so much in the period of the Judges, etc. His audience and he understood these matters. It is only scholastic critics with time for microscopic analyses who find serious trouble at such places.

God gave the covenant of circumcision (*verse* 8) before he gave the land and under this the patriarchs were born. It was not the formal and physical symbols on which God placed primary emphasis.

There is an analogy between the way the patriarchs treated Joseph and the treatment his generation of Jews

him, 10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers the first time. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's race became manifest unto Pharaoh. 14 And Joseph sent, and called to him Jacob his father, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 And Jacob went down into Egypt; and he died, himself and our fathers; 16 and they were carried over unto Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver of the sons of [10]Hamor in Shechem. 17 But as the time of the promise drew nigh which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 till there arose another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. 19 The same dealt craftily with our race, and ill-treated our fathers, that [1]they should cast our their babes to the end they might not [2]live. 20 At which season Moses was born, and was [3]exceeding fair; and he was nourished three months in his father's house: 21 and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and

[10]Gr. *Emmor.*
[1]Or, *he*
[2]Gr. *be preserved alive.*
[3]Or, *fair unto God* Comp. 2 Cor. 10. 4.

---

gave Jesus. But God was on Joseph's side when his brothers opposed him. And Joseph suffered many indignities, hardships and delays before he came into his glory; but he was God's chosen one for deliverance of his people all these years. At length he came to be known and recognized and he delivered his people. How all this is illustrative of Jesus we can easily see. Stephen seems to have got mixed on the purchase of the burial place by Abraham. Abraham (Gen. 23) bought one at Hebron and Jacob that at Shechem (Gen. 33). He next takes up Moses from whom analogies with Jesus are suggested in great number, *verses* 17–44. Moses was born at a time when God was about to fulfill his promise to Abraham. Yet just then external conditions were so hard that children were cast out so that they might not live. Moses was fair (or elegant) to God. Yet was he cast out, and then nourished

nourished him for her own son. 22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works. 23 But when he was well-nigh forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, smiting the Egyptian: 25 and he supposed that his brethren understood that God by his hand was giving them [1]deliverance; but they understood not. 26 And the day following he appeared unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? 27 But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Wouldst thou kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday? 29 And Moses fled at this saying, and became a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons. 30 And when forty years were fulfilled, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 And when

[1]Or, *salvation*

---

by Pharaoh's daughter for her own son. Temporary neglect may be part of God's plan of exaltation. We have only here the information that "Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," but it is in accord with tradition, as is also the statement that he was mighty in "words and works." This does not need to mean that he was an eloquent speaker (see Exodus 4: 10ff).

The Old Testament does not give his age at his flight from Egypt, but the rabbis gave the age as forty (*verse* 23). So also we are not originally told that Moses had in mind that the people would accept him as God's deliverer (*verse* 25), but the expectation is natural. Stephen's point here is that by rejecting a deliverer from God the Hebrews delayed their salvation, and the application to Jesus is easy to see. In spite of his rejection and the delay of forty years (verse 30), God was with Moses and did bring salvation through him. Exodus (3: 1) tells of Horeb, not Sinai (*verse* 30), but in a general way "Wilderness of Sinai" may fitly describe the country. And we must remember that Stephen had his Jewish audience. The appearance of God to Moses

Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew
near to behold, there came a voice of the Lord, 32 I am the
God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and
of Jacob. And Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33
And the Lord said unto him, Loose the shoes from thy feet:
for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. 34 I
have surely seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt,
and have heard their groaning, and I am come down to
deliver them: and now come, I will send thee into Egypt,
35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee
a ruler and a judge? him hath God sent *to be* both a ruler
and a [5]deliverer with the hand of the angel that appeared
to him in the bush. 36 This man led them forth, having
wrought wonders and signs in Egypt, and in the Red sea,
and in the wilderness forty years. 37 This is that Moses,
who said unto the children of Israel, [6]A prophet shall God
raise up unto you from among your brethren, [7]like unto me.
38 This is he that was in the [8]church in the wilderness with

[5]Gr. *redeemer.*
[6]Dt. xviii. 15.
[7]Or, *as* he raised up *me*
[8]Or, *congregation*

is recounted (*verses* 30–34) to emphasize that "this Moses" whom his people had insolently refused God sent to them to be both ruler and redeemer (verse 35). Here we have Stephen urging forcefully Peter's point concerning Jesus (chapters 2, 3, 4). This man actually did deliver the people, with God's presence made evident by wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness wandering, for forty years (*verse* 36).

Stephen does not name Jesus in his address at all, but at this point he very distinctly hints his application of the argument to Jesus. This Moses told the children of Israel that God would raise up a prophet from their midst even as he had raised up Moses (*verse* 37). These auditors had heard Peter apply this promise directly to Jesus (chapter 3: 22). This rejected Moses God used as leader "in the church in the wilderness" to give "living oracles" to his people. The Greek word for church means assembly and the people of Israel when called solemnly together for a conference with God were called "the assembly." And there is no objection to applying the term "church" in this

the angel that spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with
our fathers: who received living oracles to give unto us:
39 to whom our fathers would not be obedient, but thrust
him from them, and turned back in their hearts unto Egypt,
40 saying unto Aaron, Make us gods that shall go before
us: for as for this Moses, who led us forth out of the land
of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. 41 And
they made a calf in those days, and brought a sacrifice
unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their hands.
42 But God turned, and gave them up to serve the host of
heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets,

[9]Did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices
Forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
43 And ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch,
And the star of the god Rephan,
The figures which ye made to worship them:
And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

[9]Amos v. 25 ff.

---

sense to the Hebrew congregation so long as no mischievous false analogies and teachings are drawn from it to apply to the Christian church.

A new phase of Israel's rejection of Moses comes forward at *verses* 39ff. They rejected him afresh, disobeyed him, thrust him from them, and turned back their hearts unto Egypt. How fully did the present Jews parallel this in their treatment of Jesus! Here Stephen uses some words not found elsewhere, as he employs a number in the speech not found again in the New Testament. Made-a-calf, *e. g.*, is a compound word made for the occasion. God punished the idolatry and stubbornness of the ancient Israelites (*verse* 42) by giving them up to the worship of heavenly bodies and gross gods. Stephen quotes from "the book of the prophets," a passage in Amos 5: 25ff, which he adapts at certain points, unless his copy read differently from ours. We have no early manuscripts of the prophets and cannot be certain as to the text. The reader can see the variations by comparing the passage with this quotation.

At *verse* 44 we make a transition in the thought, and Stephen begins to argue that the temple has no exclusive

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the
wilderness, even as he appointed who spake unto Moses, that
he should make it according to the figure that he had seen.
45 Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought in with
[10]Joshua when they entered on the possession of the [1]nations,
that God thrust out before the face of our fathers, unto the
days of David; 46 who found favor in the sight of God, and
asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. 47 But
Solomon built him a house. 48 Howbeit the Most High
dwelleth not in *houses* made with hands; as saith the
prophet,

49 [2]The heaven is my throne,
And the earth the footstool of my feet:
What manner of house will ye build me? saith the Lord:
Or what is the place of my rest?
50 Did not my hand make all these things?

[10]Gr. *Jesus.* Comp. Heb. 4. 8.
[1]Or, *Gentiles* Comp. ch. 4. 25.
[2]Is. lxvi. 1f.

---

and compelling sanctity in the approval of God. It was the tabernacle that Moses set up in the wilderness "according to the figure he had seen" with God in the mount. And "the fathers" had used this tabernacle until the days of David. Although David "found favor in the sight of God," God did not allow him to build a temple. Solomon did that. Some think Stephen discounted the temple by attributing it to Solomon. He seems to me rather to say that at length God did accept a temple but showed that he placed no great emphasis on it; for (*verse* 48) "the Most High dwelleth not in hand-structures," a principle confirmed by a quotation from Isaiah 66: 1f, where the quotation corresponds in idea, not in word, perfectly to the original as we have it. God is independent of temples and primarily his worship not only may be, it must be, apart from them.

There must have been in the appearance and behavior of the members of the council indications that Stephen would not be tolerated much further. He is reaching his climax but now bursts forth suddenly into a condemning word more severe than we find in any other witness in Acts (*verses* 51–53). Of course much would depend upon the tone in

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; 53 ye who received the law [3]as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not.

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on

[3]Or, *as the ordinance of angels* Gr. *unto ordinances of angels.*

---

which the words were uttered. He has shown how at critical times Israel has turned against God's deliverer. Using phraseology of the prophets, Stephen says, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye (emphatic) ever fall in opposition to the Holy Spirit. As your fathers, you also." The Old Testament history records the slaying of a few prophets but the traditions told of more. Stephen is well within known facts when he inquires: "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, preëminently were in the list. "They slew the ones-making-announcement-beforehand of the coming of the Righteous One." It is no wonder, then, that "ye (emphatic again) now got to be his betrayers and murderers," for "ye received the law on the basis of ministration of angels and did not guard it." Stephen's speech has made rather more of the mediation of angels than the Old Testament does and here he speaks of them "arranging" the law for the Hebrews, who in their turn had not guarded it by obeying it.

(4) The argument of the stone, met by the testimony of death (*verses* 54–60).

Stephen can go no further. This direct charge of murder the councilors have heard from Peter and John. They will listen to it no more. "By these things they were cut to the heart" (see note 5: 33, where the word is the same as here), "and gnashed their teeth at him." Stephen be-

the right hand of God, 56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the wit-

---

gan by speaking of "the God of glory," referring to God's self-contained majesty. Now he is permitted to see that glory, as "full of the Holy Spirit, he looked up stedfastly into heaven." And he saw "Jesus standing (perfect, having stood) out from the right hand of God." For the first time he names his Lord and uses the name "Son of man" which Jesus so often applied to himself, and which, outside the Gospels, is found only here in the entire New Testament. This is the first vision of the ascended Lord granted to anyone, and fittingly it is to his first martyr who is dying for his Name in a manner so similar to the Lord's own death. It was to this very assembly Jesus had said: "Henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22: 69). Peter and John have repeatedly declared to them that Jesus was thus exalted. Now Stephen declares that he sees him, not seated, to be sure, but standing, having risen in sympathy with the present situation and ready to receive Stephen. Certainly we are not to make overmuch of these physical presentations of the spiritual Redeemer, but they signify something.

Stephen was speaking terrible blasphemy unless he was telling of an actual vision. His enemies would not admit the truth of his words. So they shouted aloud to drown his voice and stopped their ears so as not to defile them with his words, and rushed with common impulse upon him. Not to defile the holy city with his blood, they cast him outside and there stoned him to death. It takes the world a long time to learn that the use of physical force can really refute no word of reason. How piously punctilious are these Jews in committing their murder! They answer the charge of murder with a fresh murder, but they are at pains to do it regularly. The witnesses must cast

nesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep. 8 1 And Saul was consenting unto his death.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all

---

the first stones (Deut. 17: 7), and they "laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." From the standpoint of Roman law the proceeding was illegal, but they could count on Pilate, and for Roman law in itself they did not care. The spirit of Jesus was in his servant. As they stoned him he was saying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Compare the words of Jesus on the cross (Luke 23: 46). Then, again, like Jesus (Luke 23: 34), he prayed, "Lord, do not cause this sin to stand to their account." Death plays little part in the Christian vocabulary. Luke beautifully tells the story in the brief statement: "Having said this, he went to sleep!" How can you stop the work of men who can go to sleep quietly under a murderous hail of stones?

(5) The part of a young man named Saul (8: 1; 7: 58; 6: 9).

"Saul was consenting" to Stephen's death, keeping the clothes of the murderers and glad to see a mouth stopped that had proved too much for him in argument. He will never get away from the impressions of this scene. Years later he refers to it (chapter 22: 20), and the account here probably comes from him through Luke.

The first period of witnessing is fulfilled. We must next enter upon the second stage of the Commission.

II. Witnessing in All Judaea and Samaria. 8: 1—12: 25.

This second section of our book tells of fulfilling the second geographical division of the Commission, during which also we witness the "opening of a door of faith to the nations."

scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison.

---

1. Beginning of Expansion. Chapter 8.

(1) Severe persecution the occasion (*verses* 1–3). There arose, "got to be," on the very day of Stephen's death a persecution that was great against the church that was in Jerusalem. For the first time the Jewish parties have united to put down the new movement. A leader has appeared with all the qualities needed for a vigorous effort. He is young and vigorous, clean of life and sincere in purpose, has culture, learning and standing, deep conviction and narrow religious ideas, and unlimited self-confidence as well as the admiring confidence of his official superiors. Saul of Tarsus will be a great leader of the effort to put down the church. As yet there is but one church. No differentiation unto groups in the various cities has been made. All Christians thus far are in the one Jerusalem group.

Having gotten a taste of blood, the crowd is ready for immediate action. All believers are at once scattered throughout (literally down) the regions of Judæa and Samaria "except the apostles." The sudden terror is strikingly shown by their not even burying Stephen's body, for the "devout men" who buried him amid great lamentation seem not to have been Christians.

Saul undertook to make thorough extermination of the church. He made house-to-house inquisition and dragged forth men and women and committed them to prison. How the apostles were able to remain in Jerusalem is an unexplained puzzle of that early history. I take no stock in the suggestion that they supinely ceased all efforts at propagating their religion, went into hiding and so escaped. With their church members all scattered, and with the public in ferment, their usual activities were no doubt largely suspended. It may be that with the previous experience of

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about [4]preaching the word. 5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. 6 And

[4]Comp. marg. note on ch. 5. 42.

---

the supernatural power protecting and actuating the apostles, Saul and his supporters decided not to risk fresh exercise of this power and a new wave of popular attachment to them, but, ignoring the apostles, sought rather to destroy their following. The Spirit of God being now ready for a new step in the work was utilizing the persecution and consequent scattering and so does not seem to have desired to keep up in Jerusalem for a time an attracting center of power. This cessation of supernatural power may have left the Twelve puzzled and disturbed, or they may have been led to see somewhat into the Spirit's plans and to acquiesce in quiet waiting while they held the central nucleus of organization in Jerusalem. Further conjecture is useless.

(2) Compelled to scatter, the believers carry the good tidings abroad (*verses* 4–40).

The general fact is stated in *verse* 4, and we must understand this as giving the rule of what was done by thousands of scattered men and women who believed in Jesus.

The rest of the chapter is taken up with the activities of one specially active and successful man who was thus driven forth. But in kind, if not in degree, what Philip did is what other thousands were doing, less notably and less successfully, no doubt.

a. Philip brings the Christ and much joy to Samaria (*verses* 5–8).

Philip was one of the seven, and like Stephen was a "lay" preacher. There seems to have been no feeling of need for any special designation or ordination to authorize him to preach and to baptize. The Roman notion of "orders of ministers" and of special sanctity of ordination has corrupted the thinking of nearly all Christians until the privi-

the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. 7 [5]For *from* many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was much joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime in the city used sorcery, and amazed the [6]people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the great-

[5]Or, *For many of those that had unclean spirits that cried with a loud voice came forth*
[6]Gr. *nation.*

---

lege and duty of lay service are not easily grasped and accepted even by Baptists.

Philip's immediate and large success recalls the similar experience of Jesus in his early ministry (John 4). We are reminded, too, of the eagerness of the Samaritan woman about the Messiah when we read that it was "the Messiah" that Philip preached to them now with such acceptance that "they gave heed with common impulse." Philip's ministry was helped by "signs" of healing which included violent demoniacs, palsied and lame, and "many" of each of these classes. No wonder "there got to be much joy in that city."

b. Philip wins a notable convert (*verses* 9–13).

Simon for a considerable time had amazed the population (literally *race*) of Samaria with unusual magic. "Magus," or magician, is simply a designation of Simon's profession. Religion throughout the Roman empire was in a chaotic state and there were many seeking to teach the people. There were also many religious fakirs and charlatans who made merchandise of the fears and uncertainties, as of the hopes and longings of the people. Simon was of this class. He gave it out that he was "some great one" with special religious insight and especially in league with divine power. His tricks were so remarkable and so subtle that for a long time he had the people quite beside themselves, literally "he had stood them out of themselves" (*verse* 11). From least to greatest they gave heed to him and

est, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. 11 And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. 12 But when they believed Philip [7]preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great [8]miracles wrought, he was amazed.

14 Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 who, when they were come down,

[7]Comp. marg. note on ch. 5. 42. [8]Gr. *powers.*

---

reckoned that "this man is that power of God which is called Great." Just what supreme manifestation they had in mind we cannot now know, but apparently they looked upon him as an incarnation of God. One of the pathetic things is to see people deluded and exploited by those who will take advantage of their deepest religious longings. It is a relief here to find Philip coming opportunely with the "good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ," preaching God's real presence and actual incarnation. Men and women accepted the truth in faith and were baptized. Simon, too, believed and was baptized and "stedfastly applied himself to Philip," and in his turn was beside himself ("stood out of himself") as he beheld both signs and great powers (manifestations of power) coming to pass through Philip. His tricks amazed the Samaritans, but here were the genuine works of God.

c. Philip's work inspected and approved by apostles and the Holy Spirit (*verses* 14–17).

The apostles, remaining at Jerusalem, were the responsible and authoritative leaders of the church and witnesses of the gospel. When they "heard that Samaria had received the word of God" they naturally felt impelled to look into it, and sent Peter and John, the recognized heads of the group. The specific end they had in view is not explained, but a new group of people, only half Jewish, were reported to have been baptized in profession of the faith.

prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: 16 for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the [9]Holy Spirit was given, he

[9]Some ancient authorities omit *Holy*

Presumably they would in a general way be regarded as members of the as yet undivided Jerusalem church. The apostles were the proper ones to approve or to question the reception of these first Samaritans. Peter and John found no fault with Philip's work, but "prayed concerning them that they might receive the Holy Spirit," and when they had "laid their hands on them" the Spirit's evidences were seen. This was in some miraculous way, whether by miracles, tongues or prophecy we are not told. It was something that could be seen, recognized by physical senses. Thus the Holy Spirit distinctly gave his sanction to this extension of the gospel beyond the Jewish limits and to the reception into the church of these Samaritan believers. We shall see how each new advance is thus approved as the work goes on.

That the Holy Spirit had previously "fallen upon none of them" does not at all mean that he had not wrought in them in regeneration. They had simply "only" come to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. This seems to have been the early formula of baptism (see 2: 38; 10: 48; 19: 5, etc.), although we need not suppose any invariable form of words. Always there is the recognition of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit but the baptism had especial reference to Jesus.

d. The notable convert proves a failure (*verses* 18–24).

Whether Simon had shared in the gifts of the Spirit we cannot know. This would not necessarily be conditioned on his genuine conversion. Judas had the gifts of miracles, etc., and see especially the words of Jesus in Matthew 7: 22f.

offered them money, 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this [10]matter: for thy heart is not right before God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. 23

[10]Gr. *word.*

Simon saw that the gift of the Spirit came through the laying on of the apostles' hands, and the passion for power and money suggested to him at once a "thought of the heart" full of possibilities. If only he could confer such power his fortune and reputation would be made. He knew of no such power, apart from the apostles. That Barnabas (chapter 11) and Ananias (chapter 9) had this power ought to silence the Episcopal contention that only apostles had this power, but it does not. Simon came with money ("useful things") and said: "Give to me, too, (as well as yourselves) this authority," in order that he might at will bestow gifts of the Holy Spirit. Peter's sense of outrage leads to vigorous expression: "May thy silver, with thyself, be for destruction because that which God gives as a free-gift (in sovereign bestowal) thou didst think to procure by means of money (things of value). There is for thee nor share nor lot in this word, for thy heart is not upright over against God." This translation serves to bring out better than a smoother rendering Peter's idea and emotion. This was a gift which was wholly sovereign and gracious and its reception depended also on a right heart attitude. Simon was fundamentally wrong, and not only could not get this gift but had no real share in the word of the gospel at all. His faith had been superficial and his baptism in vain.

But now Peter seems to relent a bit as he calls upon Simon to repent of this wickedness of his and to beg the Lord (Jesus, the Christ) if perchance the grasping thought of his heart might be forgiven. Peter did not know whether the repentance would be given in earnest and he seems not

For I see that thou [1]art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. 24 And Simon answered and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and [2]preached the gospel to the many villages of the Samaritans.

26 But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go [3]toward the south unto the way that goeth

[1]Or, *wilt become gall* (or, *a gall root*) *of bitterness and a bond of iniquity.* Comp. Dt. 29. 18; Heb. 12. 15.
[2]Gr. *brought good tidings.* Comp. ch. 5. 42.
[3]Or, *at noon* Comp. ch. 22. 6.

---

to be sure whether the sin would be forgiven, for he saw Simon plunged "into bitter gall" (gall of bitterness is a Hebrew form of expression and is from Deut. 29: 18), and held in "a bond of unrighteousness" (from Isaiah 58: 6). Was he not very near to a "sin against the Holy Spirit"? Peter does not seem to assume to decide the fate of Simon. Simon was at least frightened, but his words betray no conviction of sin and no horror of his wickedness. It is fear of what "may come upon him" that moves him to request Peter and John to pray unto the Lord in his behalf. There the sad story breaks off. Tradition has much to say of Simon and makes him a heresy leader in Rome, but we know nothing for certain. He has given his name to the sin of buying official preferment in ecclesiastical institutions, whose representatives have, alas! not always been strong, as Peter and John, against simony.

c. Philip's lead is followed by Peter and John (*verse* 25).

A mere layman, and a Hellenist, Philip had been free to preach to Samaritans, with whom Jews had no dealings (John 4: 9), and to give the gospel a new field. Peter and John were so impressed with Philip's work and the Holy Spirit's sanction of it that they not only lingered to share in the testimony and speaking of the Word in the city of Samaria, but on their way back to Jerusalem "even evangelized many villages of the Samaritans," and thus they were led into a blessed ministry.

down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship; 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou

---

f. Philip sent to lead a foreigner to Christ (*verses* 26–39). Philip is now led on a still more bold venture in the gospel. An angel of the Lord, which in Luke's own language means of Jesus, told him to get up and go "down south" on the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. The expression "down south" is nearly that in 22: 6, rendered "about midday," and literally means "down the midday sun." So the margin suggests the reading "at noon;" but "toward the south" is more probable. At any rate, the directions are specific and the remark is added that this (either road or city of Gaza) was now deserted, as the ancient Gaza had been for a hundred and thirty years at this time, a new town on the coast having taken its place after its destruction by the Romans. As he went under this divine direction he came upon an Ethiopian gentleman, a courtier eunuch of Candace, queen of Ethiopians, head of her treasury with all her treasure under his care. Ethiopia was at that time a rather vague term for territory lying south of Egypt. Pliny, the Roman historian, informs us that Meroe was at this time ruled by queens under the name Candace (Kandake).

This courtier from the far-away land, about where Abyssinia is, was clearly a proselyte to Judaism and had made the long journey for the purpose of worshiping in Jerusalem, and was now on his way back. As he went he read his Old Testament, sitting in his carriage. The Spirit sent Philip forward at just the right moment to catch the eunuch reading the wonderful sacrificial messianic fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He was at what we now call *verse* 7

what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,

[4]He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,
So he opened not his mouth:
33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:
His generation who shall declare?
For his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? 35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, [5]preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as

[4]Is. liii. 7 f. [5]See marg. note on ch. 5. 42.

---

when Philip broke in with the inquiry: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" In the Greek there is a play on words that relieves the apparent abruptness of the inquiry. The two words are the same except for a prefix *ana*, and Philip even made the similarity greater by an interrogative particle *ara*. We can imitate by using English letters: *ana ge ginōskeis ha anaginōskeis?* The eunuch took it kindly and confessing his need of a guide through the difficult passage, invited Philip to sit with him. The opportunity was eagerly seized. The second part of the passage quoted in our text offers very great difficulties of interpretation, growing chiefly out of obscurities in the Hebrew text. But Philip and the eunuch had the Greek text which is less difficult and we may well do as they probably did, go straight to the main point. The eunuch wanted to know whether by this suffering Servant the prophet meant himself or someone different. That gave Philip his opportunity and he began right there and "evangelized to him Jesus." The passage told of one whose life was taken away from the earth, who was deprived of judgment in his humiliation, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. How readily Philip preached the atonement of Jesus from this passage. Neither of these two men thought of any but a personal

they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?[g] 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when

[g]Some ancient authorities insert, wholly or in part, ver. 37 *And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

---

application of the passage. The "national servant" of modern critical exegesis seems not at all to have occurred to them.

The eunuch took it all in and when "down the road," they came upon a certain (stream or pool of) water, he said: "Behold, water, what hinders me being baptized?" and commanded his driver to stop. The Revised Version omits *verse* 37 of the Authorized Version. There is almost no manuscript ground for it, and nearly all students agree that the words are to be omitted: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." One commentary (Rackham) agrees that the textual evidence is overwhelmingly against the verse but cannot conceive that Philip baptized the man without a confession, and advances the absurd theory that Luke revised for brevity by striking out the words because they were known to be universally used in receiving members! McGarvey's commentary says frankly that the words are spurious. But he then proceeds to argue that Philip would require some "confession" from the man and that this was the confession and that therefore it is legitimate to employ this one. But it would hardly be legitimate to make this the sole and invariable form of confession, giving it a ceremonial value, and especially if it were used to avoid a relation of experience of repentance and faith. The New Testament provides no form of words for receiving confessions of faith and any such form is foreign to the spirit of Christianity.

they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he [7]preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

[7]See marg. note on ch. 5. 42.

The record for some reason emphasizes that "both Philip and the eunuch" "went down into the water" for baptism, possibly because on this road it might have been possible to suppose some compromise and Luke is careful to say that it was a full, real baptism.

When they "had come up out of the water" "the Lord's Spirit snatched Philip away" so that his going was strikingly sudden. In this, as in several items, Philip reminds us of Elijah and of John the Baptist. The eunuch did not see Philip again (any longer), but he had got the Redeemer through Philip, and so "he went on his way rejoicing," and carried his Saviour with him to his distant home. These Ethiopians were one of the finest types of Africans in every way and this man was evidently one of the best of his race. We hear nothing more of Christianity there until early in the fourth century, when Frumentius and Edesius, two brothers, led the royal family to the faith.

g. Glad tidings from Azotus to Caesarea (*verse* 40).

Philip appeared next in Azotus, the ancient Ashdod, and from there he went through all the cities of the Mediterranean plain and evangelized them until he came to Cæsarea, where he seems to have settled down and we hear nothing more of him for some twenty years (chapter 21: 8). He was a noble prophet, evangelist and a pioneer missionary.

2. The Living Lord Lays Hold on the Leader of the Persecution. 9: 1–31.

We come now upon another step in the outward development of the gospel. But this step was taken by the reigning Lord himself. He is laying hold on a man, the most significant for Christianity ever won to Christ. The inci-

dent illustrates, what is so graphically taught later in the Revelation, that in all the persecutions of his people Jesus is vitally conscious and that he does not allow matters ever to get beyond his control.

Acts contains three accounts of Saul's conversion, the simple outline story of it here; the narrative which Paul gave to the Jews in Jerusalem as explaining how he came to be in his then position with reference to Judaism (chapter 22); and the account he gave in the address before Festus and Agrippa (chapter 26). Besides these accounts, Paul makes reference to it in Galatians 1, Phillipians 3, 1 Corinthians 9: 1, 15: 8, etc. Each account is adapted to its immediate purpose and gives some information not found elsewhere. There are no contradictions and no inconsistencies except as superficially considered. Paul must have told his experience many times. It was not only the one explanation of his remarkable career and the ground of his apostleship; but it was also the proof of the Lord's ability and willingness to redeem sinners. Hence Paul commended his Saviour by telling of his own salvation. The method by which Christ "laid hold on him" (Phil. 3: 12) was peculiar and supernatural, but the experience of regeneration and conversion were in all essential respects such as all redeemed men know.

Saul was born in Tarsus, of a father who was already a Roman citizen. The family were aristocratic and loyal Hebrews and, although living outside Palestine, identified with the Pharisee party. Saul was brought up in the strictest religious way and in due time sent to Jerusalem for education in the school of Gamaliel, the most distinguished rabbi of his day. Saul was precocious, studious, conscientious, upright in conduct, aggressive, a natural leader, rich in emotional life and consequently a man of friendly disposition, to whom men were attached with quick and abiding devotion. In his native city was the third most noted university of the time, and so there would be much of culture. That Saul was greatly influenced by this is shown abun-

9 But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round

---

dantly in his writings. He had the logical, inquiring mind of the philosopher and the spiritual insight of a theologian, while also he had the practical interest and ability of the efficient organizing leader. Christianity needed just such a man and at the opportune moment God, who had separated him from his mother's womb, chose him as a channel for revealing his Son (Gal. 1: 15f); and that Son himself called him into salvation and service.

(1) A Blinding Light and a Summoning Voice at the Climax of Persecution. *Verses* 1–9.

Saul is now brought forward again (cf. 8: 3). His destructive work in and about Jerusalem was largely done. So bitter was he that Luke says he was even "breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." The word *disciples* is new here, but will be found often from this on. In the Gospels it is the usual term.

Paul's aggressiveness is shown by the fact that he went to the high priest for letters to the rulers of the synagogues at Damascus with "authority to bring bound to Jerusalem any of the Way whom he might find there." Jews were numerous in Damascus and there would naturally be Christians there, who appear still to have been worshiping with the Jews in their synagogues when Saul came. The high priest would be either Caiaphas or, more probably, one of the sons of Annas, either Jonathan or Theophilus. It depends upon the date of Saul's conversion, which falls between the years 33 and 38, more probably about 35.

The journey was nearly done when suddenly about noon on a clear day a light burst upon Saul and his companions, above the brightness of the sun, which is especially bright

about him a light out of heaven: 4 and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why pesecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he *said,* I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: 6 but rise,

---

in that country. He fell to the ground, whether from a horse as is popularly presented in the idealized pictures, or whether he and his companions were traveling on foot none of the accounts tells us.

All heard a sound which to Saul was an articulating voice speaking his sacred Hebrew language and calling to him by the ancient Hebrew form of his name, 'S'aoul, S'aoul, why dost thou persecute me?" Saul asks who is speaking and addresses him as "Lord." The term need not mean more than "Honorable sir," but it is the same word which was employed by the disciples and always after this by Saul to address Jesus as the Lord, and as he had already seen Jesus in the flashing light the expression is probably an impulsive recognition of the glorified Christ. Again Jesus speaks: "I am Jesus (of Nazareth, 22: 8) whom thou art persecuting," the *I* is emphatic and the twice repeated present tense in "persecutest" emphasizes the bitter mistake and sin of Saul's work and of his present purpose. In hounding these disciples of the dead Nazarene, Saul was really persecuting. the living Jesus Christ. The whole horrible, sinful error of his course and of his soul burst upon him. He had probably seen Jesus in his ministry (see 2 Cor. 5: 16), and had rejected him, none more emphatically. He had Stephen's declaration that in death he saw Jesus standing at God's right hand, and he had been deeply impressed by the glory that shone in Stephen's face during his speech and at his death. He had heard Stephen's proofs that Jesus was the Christ and had been angry to find himself unable to answer "the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." And in his deeper self Saul was a kind, gentlemanly, religious man. This career of persecution was essentially repulsive to the finer feeling of Saul; and so Jesus appealed to the consciousness of Saul when he went on to say, as reported in Acts

and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the [s]voice, but beholding no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened,

[s]Or, *sound*

26: "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (or "goads," *i. e.*, proddings of the goad). Saul's feeling is expressed in his reply, reported in Acts 22: "What shall I do, Lord?" Over against the condemning word the forgiving and encouraging attitude of Jesus is expressed in the strong "but" of *verse* 6. Notwithstanding your career of bitter antagonism, "get up and proceed into the city and it will be told thee what it is necessary for thee to do." A man of action like Saul needs this word and what was hinted in the "do" he shows in his later reports of this experience (Acts 22 and 26), as having reference not primarily to getting forgiveness but to future service. His surrender and change of attitude seem to have been complete here on the road. But his sense of adjustment and peace in his new attitude came more slowly, as is natural.

During this experience between Jesus and Saul, the men accompanying him in the journey having all at first fallen to the ground (26: 14), had stood up again (*verse* 7, perfect tense) and remained speechless. They had both seen the light (26: 13, 22: 9) and heard the voice speaking (*verse* 7), but had neither seen the form of Jesus (*verse* 7), nor understood the speech of Jesus (22: 9). The apparent contradiction between verse 7, "hearing the voice," and 22: 9, "they heard not the voice of him that spake to me," disappears at once on examining the Greek where the verb *hear* is followed by the ablative case in *verse* 7, expressing the mere sensation of hearing, and by the *accusative* case in 22: 9, expressing the idea of comprehending what is said. Compare a similar situation in Jesus' experience, John 12: 28f.

Now, Saul gets up, but his opened eyes do not see, and he must be led by the hand by his companions. In Damascus

he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias, And he said, Behold I *am here*, Lord. 11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth; 12 and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 But Ananias

---

he remains in darkness three days, fasting completely and praying. This experience of Saul has been compared to the Lord's period in the tomb, and truly Saul was raised to new life when the light came upon him again.

(2) A Timid Personal Worker Gives Voice to the Holy Spirit to Saul. *Verses* 10–19a.

That Ananias was at the same time "a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt" in Damascus (22: 12), and "a disciple" in the service of the Lord shows that up to this time Jews and Christians in Damascus were on friendly terms.

To Ananias the Lord came "in a vision," which usually means a presentation made to one awake; if it is in sleep the fact must be mentioned (see *e. g.*, Dan. 7: 1). The directions to Ananias show how the Lord had further revealed to Saul how he was to be instructed. Ananias is told just where he will find Saul, in Judas' house on Straight street, which still runs the length of the city east and west. The Lord's vision describes Saul as if Ananias knew nothing of him. The compelling fact is that "behold he is praying."

God's way of answering Saul's prayer is significant. He showed him this Ananias "coming in and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight." The supernatural is at work all the way through, the miraculous is limited. Instead of giving Saul his sight, and his great commission by miraculous words, the Lord prepares the way and then

answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a [9]chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name

[9]Gr. *vessel of election.*

employs this timid, obscure man to lead the mighty persecutor into apostleship. This was a good experience for both men, and a good lesson for disciples of Jesus in all times. Ananias hesitates and demurs. He has heard of this man from many, and of how great things he did to the Lord's saints in Jerusalem. Here we meet the first example of the use of the term "saints," or "set apart ones," of the Lord. It is a very frequent term in Paul's writings. It is never used in the Bible in the modern (Roman Catholic) way to designate Christians who have died and been glorified. Ananias continues his appeal to the Lord: Not only has Saul persecuted bitterly in Jerusalem but his business in Damascus is by authority of the supreme religious court of the Jews "to bind all that call upon thy name," or "that call thy name upon themselves," all who professed allegiance to Jesus. Hackett and others interpret "who call on thy name in worship" and the phrase may mean that, but it cannot be insisted upon. The Lord commands with a peremptory word: "Go thy way," better "Go on;" but he also explains, "Because a vessel of choice to me is this one for bearing my name (as in a vessel) in the presence of Gentiles, even kings and (in the presence) of the children of Israel." Jesus who chose the Twelve found here "a chosen vessel" for very special use. Paul himself became the great expounder of the eternal choice of God and of his call of men in Christ Jesus.

The other New Testament writers teach the same doctrine. Ananias must go on, "for" Jesus will show him by experience, as well as give him a present insight into how much he must suffer in behalf of Jesus' name. Ananias called attention to "how much evil" Saul had done to Je-

before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17 And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord *even* Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. 18 And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; 19 and he took food and was strengthened.

---

sus' saints, Jesus calls attention to "how much" (the same word) suffering he will experience in behalf of Jesus. By use of the pronoun "I," Jesus emphasizes his part in thus dealing with Saul.

Ananias obeys at once. Going into the house where Saul was he laid his hand on him in sympathetic touch and addressed him most kindly, using his name in its Hebrew form: "S'aoul, brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus, the one seen by you in the road by which you came, in order that you may look up and be made full of the Holy Spirit." By this order of words Ananias gave separate value to each phrase of his opening sentence. One thinks that a double meaning was conveyed by "look up." Saul was to see again, and to see with new vision the call of Christ Jesus. The "filling with the Holy Spirit" has reference to equipment for service, as always in the New Testament, and not to the work of regeneration or of personal purification. It involved in Saul's case gifts of miraculous powers. The first evidence of such gift was that Saul recovered his sight. There seemed ("as it were") to fall from his eyes scales, or films (the word appears only here in the New Testament).

Whether Saul went out of the building when he "arose" we cannot tell. Houses in the East, and especially in Damascus, frequently had fountains and pools in their courts. He was baptized, took nourishment and recovered strength which he had lost by the shock and the fasting. Chapter 22 has a fuller account of this part of the experience.

And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus. 20 And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus that he is the Son of God. 21 And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

---

(3) The Great Apostle to the Heathen in the Making. *Verses* 19b–30.

Saul is now a saint (one set apart) of Jesus, and a disciple (learner), and a servant, and has a call to be a missionary. But he needs much training. It was from six to eight years after his conversion to the beginning of his distinctive apostolic work, about 44 A.D. His preparation is to consist in adjustment and development of his theological views, a reinterpretation of his Bible (Old Testament) in the light of the Messiah already come, experience in evangelism, learning the nature and organization of the church as the working institution of the gospel of the kingdom of God. Immediately we find him

a. Confounding the Jews and Astonishing All with Proofs that Jesus is the Son of God (*verses* 19b–22).

Saul for "certain days" was associated with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began preaching in the synagogues, still accessible for this work (cf. verse 2). His method was to prove that Jesus was (is) the Son of God (*verse* 20) and the Christ (*verse* 22). Cf. Matthew 16: 16; John 17: 1–3; 20: 31. Instead of "increased the more in strength" it is better to understand the passive sense, "was the more empowered," *i. e.*, by the Holy Spirit. The word for "confuted" means that Saul "muddled up" (originally "mixed by pouring together") the Jews who opposed his teaching. The whole populace was amazed at Saul's present course after the "intent" with which he had come thither.

23 And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him: 24 but their plot became known

b. A Period of Retirement for Adjusting Himself. (*Gal.* 1: 15–18.)

Luke's account here indicates an omission which Paul supplies in Galatians. The paragraph we have just been studying covers only "certain days" (*verse* 19), while the next paragraph has to do with events that occurred "when many days were fulfilled." Paul tells us that the "many "days" were some "three years." As the conviction became clear that God would use him for revealing his Son among the Gentiles, Saul felt the need of adjusting his whole idea of God's plan and his entire personal attitude to the new thought. It must be true and evident that his call and commission were direct from God. So he "conferred not with flesh and blood" nor "went up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him," but "went away into Arabia" and only "after three years" went again to Jerusalem. This seems to be the best arrangement of the facts. Galatians 1: 18 may refer to a later visit, but hardly to that of Acts 12, and no other is mentioned or seems very probable, to which this statement could apply.

c. The Former Persecutor Fleeing for His Life (*verses* 23–25).

From Arabia, then, Saul returns to Damascus. It would be a good thing if every young preacher would take time for adjustment before spending more than "certain days" in preaching, and this is the more necessary if the young preacher is creating a sensation and showing unusual ability, most important of all if he has a conviction of call and commission to extraordinary service. Careful study will show that this was the way of every young minister of the New Testament whose course we know. Even Jesus took this way, and under the leading of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4: 1ff).

to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him: 25 but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

26 And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared

---

Saul is now to have the experience he and others had given Stephen. Unable to answer his arguments, the Jews will want to kill him. They enlist the governor, who sets watches day and night at the gates of the city to prevent Saul's escape (see 2 Cor. 11: 32f for the additional items). Already Saul had become a recognized leader, so that we read that it was "his disciples" who lowered him through a window of a house on the wall so that he "escaped his (the governor's) hands."

d. Preaching and Persecuted in Jerusalem, Returns to His Home in Tarsus (*verses* 26–30).

It is interesting to contrast Saul's actual return to Jerusalem with that of his purpose three years before. Truly he has learned something of the power of Jesus in this time.

When he had "come along to Jerusalem" and "tried to join himself" to the disciples of Jesus there is something pathetic in their all being afraid of him and not believing his declaration that he was now one of them. He had left Damascus too precipitately to bring his church letter, if they had such things in those days. It is interesting to observe that Saul is the first man of whom we read whose application to join the Jerusalem church was rejected.

But Barnabas, that fine man whose large heart and clear head, and whose obvious use by the Holy Spirit had given him such good standing in the brotherhood (see chapter 4), took him in hand, told his story (*verse* 27), and got him accepted in the fellowship of the disciples. It was "before the apostles" that Barnabas took Saul, yet if our arrange-

John Newport

unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, 29 preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the [10]Grecian Jews; but they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

[10]Gr. *Hellenists.*

---

ment of events is correct only Peter and James, the Lord's brother, were here at this time (Gal. 1: 19). It seems rather strange that they needed the leading of this layman. Recall how Philip first showed the way in preaching to Samaritans. That Barnabas and Saul were both "Grecian" (Hellenistic) Jews helps account for their quicker understanding of each other.

Saul became fully identified with the apostolic group at once (*verse* 28), and entered boldly upon preaching, doubtless lending a needed element of courage in these days of persecution. He devoted himself especially to talking with and arguing against the Grecian Jews, to which group he belonged and with whom he had tried to stand against Stephen. It was not long until his old associates were ready to extend their treatment of Stephen to Saul. But "the brethren," getting to know the danger, brought Saul into Cæsarea and sent him home to Tarsus. That there was another reason for his going we learn in Acts 22.

Imagination loves to deal with Saul's return to his home in Tarsus from which he had gone out some years earlier with such high hopes of returning a promising rabbi. And he had made such progress for a time! (cf. Gal. 1; Phil. 3, etc.) Now he comes back, a persecuted, fleeing disciple of the Nazarene. What did the family think of it all? How did Saul himself feel as he left the ship at the port of Tarsus? The records are wholly silent. We shall later read of "a sister's son" in Jerusalem (23: 16ff). Beyond that all the family history is conjecture.

31 So the church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being [1]edified; and, walking [2]in the fear of the Lord and [3]in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied.

[1]Or, *builded up.* [2]Or, *by*

(4) The Church Peaceful, Comforted and Growing, in the Holy Spirit. *Verse* 31.

As a consequence of Saul's conversion ("so," or "therefore") "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace." Without Saul's able leadership the persecution gradually waned. Then from general history we know that just now serious trouble with the Romans arose on account of the efforts to compel Jews to worship the images of Caligula, and this would tend to divert them from the Christians. "The church" still includes all believers in the whole of Palestine. Either, as Baptists and other democratic denominations hold, the development of independent local organizations had not yet arisen, or the term is applied in a general sense to include all believers in this territory. In Galatians 1: 22, referring to this same period, Paul speaks of "the churches of Judæa" which lends color to the second interpretation. Still it may well be, as many Baptists (Broadus, etc.) have held, that Paul speaks from the standpoint of his writing several years later, while Luke speaks here from the standpoint of the fact at this time. In this view the differentiation into churches took place between the two dates. We must remember that throughout the New Testament period churches included in their organization more territory and more people than later custom provided. Always, the disciples of a city and the surrounding territory seem to have remained in a unified single church.

Compare the letters to "the seven churches" in the seven large cities in the province of Asia (Rev. 2, 3).

This Palestinian church in its period of rest was built up, made progress in (or by means of) the fear of the Lord (Jesus) and in (or by means of) the comfort (or here the

32 And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all parts, he came down also to the saints that dwelt at Lydda. 33

---

idea is almost that of our general sense of "inspiration") of the Holy Spirit. Hence (the number in) the church "was multiplied," or better, "was made larger, or fuller."

3. Peter "Breaks the Shell of Judaism" and the Church Grasps a New Truth. 9: 32—11: 18.

In taking up the activities of various men to illustrate the work and development of this period and to show how this work led on to a universal preaching of the gospel, Luke still follows a general chronological order. Peter (Cephas) was still in Jerusalem when Saul returned there as a disciple (Gal. 1: 18), but the freedom from persecution and the period of new growth over all Palestine caused him to begin, or to take up again (see 8: 14ff), an itinerant ministry of evangelization and supervision. This extended "throughout all parts" of Judæa at least and probably included Samaria with possibly Galilee. While "all parts" expresses a fact the "also" with "saints . . . at Ldyia," suggests that "among all saints" is rather Luke's form of thought. The Greek has only "through all," leaving the noun to be got from the context. Only some specially significant examples of his work are reported, and such as constitute the links in a chain of experiences that led to one of the epochal steps in the growth of the kingdom work. The other apostles must have gone already on similar missions, since Paul says, in Galatians 1: 19, that on his visit only Peter and James were there.

(1) Miracles and Converts at Lydda and Joppa. *Verses* 32–43.

At Lydda, Peter is in the plain of Sharon and following in the wake of Philip (8: 44), who has already planted the new flower of Christian faith in that fair plain.

Here Peter found a man who for eight years had been "confined to his bed with paralysis." He has a distinctly

And there he found a certain man named Æneas, who kept his bed eight years; for he was palsied. 34 And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee: arise, and make thy bed. And straightway he arose. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called [3]Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in

[3]That is, *Gazelle.*

Greek name, but so had many Jews at this time, *c. g.*, Philip and Andrew among the Lord's Twelve, and see 6: 5. Peter's healing of this man reminds us sharply of similar healings by Jesus (cf. John 5: 2–9; Mark 2: 3–12, etc.). It is not said that Æneas was a believer, but this seems to be assumed in the story. Peter announces to him that Jesus Christ heals him and commands Æneas to get up and make his bed "for himself," a service others had been doing for him all these years. The immediate obedience shows Æneas' faith. Peter does not lift him up.

The purpose of the miracle (cf. 4: 4) is achieved, for "all (generally speaking) that dwelt at Lydda and in the plain (rather than village, as some think) of Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord;" "because they saw" is suggested by the Greek expression.

Tabitha is the Chaldee (and Aramaic) name of the good woman among the disciples at Joppa who "was full of good works and almsdeeds" which she was in the habit of doing (so the imperfect tense). These deeds consisted in making "coats and garments" for the widows of the community (*verse* 39). Her name means gazelle, the Greek for which is Dorcas. And from her the Christian name has come down and also groups of women in our churches devoting themselves to such work as hers are frequently called "Dorcas societies." When Dorcas "got sick and died," the disciples did not at once bury the body, as would be usual, but "laid

an upper chamber. 38 And as Lydda was nigh unto Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, entreating him, Delay not to come on unto us. 39 And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa: and many be-

---

it out" in an upper room and, having heard that Peter was at Lydda, sent the twelve miles, urging him "not to delay to come through to us."

When he arrived they took him at once into the room where the body was surrounded by weeping widows who eagerly showed the various garments which ("how many") Dorcas had made "while with them."

That there was at least some expectation that Peter would restore her to life seems only reasonable. Like Elijah (1 Kings 17: 17ff) and Elisha (2 Kings 4: 32ff), and like Jesus with Jairus' daughter, Peter had himself left alone in the room while he prayed, after falling upon his knees. Perhaps he could pray better alone and with no curious and questioning people present (cf. Jesus in Matt. 9: 25). Assured of his answer, Peter now turned to the body, called Tabitha by name and told her to get up. The description is very circumstantial. She opened her eyes, saw Peter, whom she may or may not have seen before, sat up. He gave her his hand, now that she was alive and would not "defile" him by the touch, and raised her up, from the pallet. Calling the saints and (especially) the widows, Peter presented Dorcas "living." Some of the widows may not have been saints, believers.

Like the miracle at Lydda, and all others generally, this restoration, which is the first in Acts, resulted in "many believing on the Lord." Peter thus has more work there to organize and remains "many days," stopping with "one

lieved on the Lord. 43 And it came to pass, that he abode many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

10 Now *there was* a certain man in Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the [1]band called the Italian *band,* 2 a devout man, and one that feared God with all his

[1]Or, *cohort*

Simon a tanner," which shows less than the usual Jewish scrupulousness, since the handling of hides was an "unclean" business and Peter would be in danger of ceremonial defilement. He is on the way to spiritual freedom, but it was a long road for Peter. Yet he is shortly to take a long stride on it.

(2) A Heathen Proselyte Guided by Vision to Peter. 10: 1–8.

In Cæsarea was one Cornelius, "commander of a hundred," which was part of a cohort called the Italian. We call such an officer a captain of a company. Why the cohort, or brigade, was called the Italian we may only guess. From the few suggestions in current historical notes it seems probable that it was a "band" of volunteers from Rome, attached to the capital of Judæa as a safe nucleus of the forces of the governor who was sent out from Rome. Cæsarea was built by Nero in honor of Cæsar Augustus into a splendid city which later was made the capital of the country with a palace for the residence of the governor.

Cornelius was a Roman and very probably a citizen. He had turned away from the vanities of Roman heathenism, like so many sincere men of the day, and was a "devout" and reverent (not fearing in an abject sense) worshiper of the one God revealed in the Hebrew religion. He was not a proselyte in the sense of having accepted circumcision and attached himself formally to the Jews, but was guided in worship by the Old Testament in its spiritual teaching. It is clear that outside Palestine generally, and to some extent there, some provision was made in the synagogues for such worshipers as this.

house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. 3 He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. 4 And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter: 6 he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side. 7 And when the angel that spake unto him was departed, he called two of his household-servants, and a

---

Cornelius naturally and properly led "all his house" to share his religious attitude, he "gave much alms to the (Jewish) people," and prayed to God "always," or the meaning may be with reference to everything.

At about three P.M., an hour of prayer, Cornelius saw an angel of God distinctly in a vision which probably was objective but in any case actual. The angel came in before him and addressed him by name. Cornelius fixed his eyes upon him, and was thoroughly frightened, but asked: "What is it, Lord?" It is not possible from the term "Lord" to know whether Cornelius thought of his visitor as divine. The angel now assures him that his prayers and almsgiving, *i. e.*, the spirit and purpose of them, went up into the presence of God and, speaking in a human way, reminded God to do something in response. Hence the instruction to send for Simon Peter at Joppa. In Peter's account of this (11: 14) he says that the angel told Cornelius that Peter would tell him how he and his house might be saved. Certainly some such idea was involved in the message to Cornelius, even though Peter may be giving the meaning rather than the actual words of the angel (cf. 10: 5f, 31f; 11: 13f). The angel gave Cornelius both Peter's names and exactly located his lodging place.

When the angel "departed" Cornelius acted at once. He called two household servants, who shared his religious attitude, for they are included in "all his house" (*verse* 2), and "a devout soldier" from among his constant attendants

devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 and having rehearsed all things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour: 10 and he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance; 11 and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth: 12 wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord;

(the emphasis is laid on *devout* in Greek). He selected messengers whose sympathy and intelligence permitted him to tell them the whole experience and plan, and sent off to Joppa at once, although it was already past mid-afternoon. He was eager.

(3) The Hungry Apostle Prays and is Offered Strange Food in a Vision. *Verses* 9–16.

About noon the next day and when the messengers were already approaching Joppa, Peter went up to the flat roof of Simon's house to pray. Houses were built with a sort of roof-garden, protected by a balustrade.

Peter became very hungry, the compound word for expressing this being found only here. He desired to eat, quite possibly having fasted during all the first part of the day.

While the family, or servants, were preparing his food there came upon Peter an ecstasy, or "a trance," and he "beholds-as-a-spectacle" "the heaven opened" up, and coming down a sort of vessel as if made of a great piece of linen (probably a sail) being sent down to the earth (the housetop) by four corners (the word so translated meaning beginnings).

Inside the "sheet" were all kinds of animals of land, sea and air. Then there came a voice to Peter telling him to get up and kill something out of this promiscuous group of clean and unclean beasts, birds and reptiles, and to eat.

for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean. 15 And a voice *came* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common. 16 And this was done thrice: and straightway the vessel was received up into heaven.

17 Now while Peter was much perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for

---

The form of the vision was conditioned partly by Peter's hunger of which the Spirit of God took advantage. But Peter was not hungry enough even in a trance to forget his Jewish regulations and scruples. He answers emphatically: "By no means, Lord, for I never did eat anything common and unclean." Many of these animals were "common," not permitted for food for a Jew, and all were "unclean" now by reason of being herded together. Peter will touch none of them. He had not yet learned that the teaching of Jesus really "made clean all foods" (Mark 7: 19).

As Peter had not hesitated even to "rebuke" Jesus in former days, he is quick now to emphasize his legalism in the face of a direct word from the Lord.

The "voice" answers Peter with an emphatic contrast that is almost curt. Let us read it in the Greek order: "That which God made clean, thou, do not make it common." Peter is in contradiction with God.

This dialogue between Peter and "the voice" of the Lord was made very impressive by being twice repeated, three times in all. Immediately afterward "the vessel (sail) was received up into heaven." As it came from heaven and returned there it could hardly be "unclean." Compare Pharaoh's visions that were "double" and Daniel's and Nebuchadnezzar's; and the threefold call to Samuel.

(4) The Spirit Combines the Two Visions. *Verses* 17–23a.

Peter was very naturally perplexed ("in trouble") over this vision. Did it apply to literal food? to Jewish customs generally? to what? While he was trying to work out an interpretation, "behold" the messengers of Cornelius,

Simon's house, stood before the gate, 18 and called and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, were lodging there. 19 And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 But arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting: for I have sent them. 21 And Peter went down to the men, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was warned *of God* by a holy angel to send for thee

---

after inquiry, had found Simon's house and were at the gate inquiring whether "Simon, the one surnamed Peter, was a guest there." The account is graphically circumstantial and shows the great care of the messengers to be exact.

The Spirit of God now couples the two links he has been making separately. He told Peter of the three men down at the gate and commanded him to go down at once and go with the men with no division in his judgment, no misgivings, because the Spirit had sent the men. He was working through Cornelius and now through Peter. It is good when men get together by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Peter went down accordingly, identified himself, and asked the men, "what is the cause on account of which you are present?" They tell of the vision and especially commend Cornelius, telling of his official position, his justice as a man, his reverence for God, his good standing with the whole race of the Jews, meaning of course without exception so far as they knew him. "Warned by a holy angel" is hardly a good translation. "Advised" would be better. The word means "to transact business," and has numerous applications. In Matthew 2: 12, 22, the messages of an angel were in the nature of warnings as well as advice, and the translation of the word there has influenced the translation of other passages.

Peter, "therefore," because of all that had occurred, took the men in as his guests. They had made the journey of thirty miles or more in less than twenty-four hours, afoot

into his house, and to hear words from thee. 23 So he called them in and lodged them.

And on the morrow he arose and went forth with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And on the morrow [5]they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his kinsmen and his near friends. 25 And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and [6]worshipped him. 26 But Peter raised him up,

[5]Some ancient authorities read *he*.
[6]The Greek word denotes an act of reverence, whether paid to a creature or to the Creator.

---

in all probability. So it is not surprising that they waited until next day to start. Peter had some preparations to make, also.

(5) Goes to Cæsarea and Hears a Strange Story from Cornelius. *Verses* 23b–33.

This good Jew is now to be off on an heretical errand. "Certain" (some) of the Joppa brethren went along with Peter. This was probably due to the "long-headed" foresight of Peter (cf. at 11: 12). The next day they all "entered into Cæsarea."

Cornelius showed his entire confidence in the plan of the angel, and the depth of his interest by having ready to meet Peter and the rest, a company composed of all "his kinsfolk and near (Greek=necessary) friends," which again speaks well for the character and influence of the centurion. It has been frequently noticed that centurions in the New Testament usually appear to good advantage.

Upon Peter's entering the premises Cornelius met him, at the gate or door, and prostrated himself at his feet and "did him reverence," rather than "worshipped him." The word is used for reverence toward superior manhood or toward God, being derived from the fawning of a dog before a man. It seems incredible that Cornelius could have worshiped Peter after the words of his vision, but Peter was the saving representative of God to him and so worthy in Cornelius' thought of great reverence. The form in which

saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and findeth many come together: 28 and he said unto them, Ye yourselves know [7]how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation; and *yet* unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common or unclean: 29 wherefore also I came without gain-

[7]Or, *how unlawful it is for a man, etc.*

Luke tells of Peter's raising Cornelius up would not suggest that Peter understood himself to be worshiped as divine. His declaration that he was himself also, as well as Cornelius, human would correct any possible misapprehension and would at the same time be the polite rejection of excessive honor.

They now entered, while talking together, through the court into the room of the house where Peter discovered the company of "many come together."

Peter is apologizing to his own scruples as well as explaining to the company his presence when he begins by saying, "Ye, yourselves understand how unpermissible it is for a Jewish gentleman (the word is not merely man) to attach himself to, or to come before one-of-another-race (in friendly relationship); still in my case God showed me to call nobody common or unclean that is human." This more exact, if somewhat awkward, rendering shows how thoroughly the principle of his vision had impressed Peter.

It was a great advance to recognize that no human being must be thought of as common. It is a very difficult principle to accept practically. Peter seems to have overlooked or to have ignored the fact that these Romans and other Gentiles despised Jews quite as much as Jews contemned them, and that Cornelius had wholly set aside his pride in his eagerness for the way of life. There was nothing in the Mosaic law at all so rigid as Peter's rule here, but the strict Jews did seek to apply this exclusive regulation.

Peter says that God's lesson to him caused him to come when sent for, suspending any word in opposition which he

saying, when I was sent for. I ask therefore with what intent ye sent for me. 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, 31 and saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side. 33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord. 34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said,

---

might have had in mind. He inquires ("seeks to find out for himself") "therefore, for what reason did you send for me." He knew already, but it was polite to have a statement, and a full statement would enable Peter to proceed more easily.

Cornelius tells the story, already twice introduced into the narrative, but with some special features. It is not likely that he meant to say he had been praying for four days and was continuing up to the present hour. Rather, he is recounting how four days ago, giving himself up to prayer, he was at the time observing the 3 P.M. period of prayer, when "a man in bright apparel," the angel of verses 3, 22, appeared. The "prayers" of verse 4 indicate that his petitions often took the same direction as the "prayer" of the specific occasion when God let him know that he was heard.

Then the story continues exactly as before reported, until Cornelius comes to say (*verse* 33): "Thou, on thy part didst well to come along." Then it is a solemn and inspiring word with which he closes: "Now, therefore, all we in the presence of (the) God are here to hear all the things commanded thee by the Lord." Peter has a great opportunity with this eager, reverent, expectant audience, the first company of Gentiles to hear the gospel, and by their own invitation.

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh
righteousness, is acceptable to him. 36 [8]The word which
he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching [9]good tidings
of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—37 that say-
ing ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all
Judæa, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John
preached; 38 *even* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed

[8]Many ancient authorities read *He sent the word unto.*
[9]Or, *the gospel*

(6) In this Roman's House He Gets Eyes and Mouth Opened. *Verses* 34–43.

"Peter opened his mouth, and said, 'on truth I perceive (more emphatically, 'I get it down') that not a respecter-of-persons is God." This was taught in the Old Testament (Deut. 10: 17; 2 Chr. 19: 7, etc.), and is urged repeatedly in the New Testament. Peter now sees that nationality does not count with God. Any man who reverences God and works righteousness is acceptable to God. The reverent spirit attests and expresses itself in righteousness, not works of merit. See further on 11: 14.

Peter's address is reported in very summary outline. Was it his emotion and sense of wonder that caused him to omit formally addressing his hearers as in his other addresses? The general facts concerning the word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching the good tidings of peace through Jesus Christ, he assumes that the hearers know. He throws in the remark that this Jesus Christ is Lord of all men and so suggests that the word of peace thus far sent to the children of Israel is to extend to all. They knew the general story because it got to be known throughout all Judæa as well as Galilee, where it began. The reference to John's preaching suggests the beginning of Jesus' ministry, although the address may have given some account of John's ministry also.

The main fact was "Jesus, the one from Nazareth" (*verse* 38). God anointed him with the Holy Spirit which gave him power which he used as he went about, for doing good, in

him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. 40 Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, 41 not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, *even* to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God *to be* the Judge of the living

---

many ways, and especially for healing all that were held down under the oppressive rule of the devil. Repeating the explanation of Jesus' power in other words, Peter adds, "For God was with him." He is bringing Cornelius, and his friends, to find God in whom they already believe working salvation through Jesus, the one name (4: 12) in which this is done. Peter and those with him (or "we" may refer to the apostles) were witnesses of all that Jesus did in the country of the Jews (Palestine) and including Jerusalem where they (the Jews) slew Jesus by crucifixion. This brings Peter to his great point. He does not urge the crucifixion as revealing opposition to God as he had done in preaching to Jews. But he does here stress the resurrection and that God effected it. God also gave Jesus the authority to manifest himself. His manifestation was, to be sure, not general, "to all the people," but was to witnesses previously chosen by God, to Peter and the rest. Their testimony was based, among other evidences not named here, on eating with Jesus and drinking with him after his resurrection.

The risen Jesus had commanded these witnesses to proclaim to the people and solemnly to testify (the compound verb is stronger than simply "to testify" as the text has it) that this one—no other—is the one that has been designated (the Greek word is marked off, like the horizon) by God, Judge of living and dead. The reference is to his judging all men. "Living and dead" are to be taken here in the natural sense and not the spiritual. That is of course true

and the dead. 43 To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered

---

of Jesus but, unless fully explained, would not be pertinent to this occasion. To Jews Peter emphasized the Messiahship of Jesus as proved by his resurrection, but Gentiles would appreciate this idea less and the idea of his judging all men is more general and would here be more impressive.

Peter now finds application of the teaching of Jesus (see especially Luke 24: 44ff), and his own general teaching on Pentecost (2: 21), that God had always planned through the Redeemer's name (personality and function) to give remission of sins to "every one that believes into him," not "on" him, alone, but believes so as to come into the sphere of his redeeming activity and control. This plan of God is attested by "all the prophets." Heretofore this has been theoretical with Peter while he was applying the gospel only to Jews; now it is a practical doctrine to be immediately applied to people who were not Jews.

(7) The Holy Spirit Manifestly in Charge. *Verses* 44–48.

Peter had not yet reached his specific application according to his plan, for "while he was still speaking these matters the Holy Spirit fell on all them that were hearing the message." This was the Holy Spirit manifesting himself miraculously in them, for Peter's Jewish Christian companions were amazed because they could see that upon the Gentiles as a class (article) the sovereign gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out "also," *i. e.*, as well as upon Jewish believers at Pentecost. For these Gentiles were now "speaking with tongues and magnifying God," exactly the evidences of the Spirit's filling on Pentecost (2: 11).

Peter, 47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Thus God gave proof that he had received these into the kingdom of grace in Christ Jesus. We have seen how God thus set his seal to the reception of the Samaritans (8: 15–18). In this case the gift of the Holy Spirit preceded baptism, to convince Peter and the rest clearly that they were now accepted of God. We are not of course to confuse this "gift of the Holy Spirit" with his work of regeneration.

Here we have the Gentile Pentecost, the sanctification of the first fruits that predict the making holy of the entire lump (cf. Romans 11: 16).

Peter fully realizes the significance of the Spirit's work, and asks, in a form that shows he expects assent to his view, whether any is able to forbid the water for baptizing "these who (since they) received the Holy Spirit even as we (Jews) did." There was no objection, could be none, and Peter commanded that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the usual form of expression (cf. on 8: 16). The prepositions vary, *on*, *in*, *into*, but always it is the name of Jesus, as Christ, or as Lord.

Peter seems not to have baptized these himself but to have had his companions do it. There was no episcopal arrogation in those days (cf. Paul in 1 Cor. 1: 14f).

These new believers felt very friendly toward Peter, and they would need further instruction and possibly organization. So they asked Peter to remain with them "certain days," which no doubt he did.

11 Now the apostles and the brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat

---

(8) Contention in Jerusalem Over the New Departure. *Verses* 1–17.

So unusual and so significant a development in the work of the gospel was told widely and soon "the apostles," on various missions about the country, and "the brethren" generally "over Judæa" had heard that even the outside nations (Gentiles, or as we say, heathen) had received the word of God. The plural of "nations" is used, not of individual "Gentiles" only. This use may be because the reception by people of one nation exemplified the principle, or, more probably, in the group at Cæsarea there were people of two (Roman and Greek) or even of several races.

Jewish Christians now included "a great company of the priests" (6: 7) and many others "zealous for the law" (cf. 21: 20). They had not experienced Peter's leading into the new adventure of faith. There were misgivings, doubts and criticism. It was the beginning of a long controversy that would endanger the unity of the church, and, although apparently settled more than once, would persist. The controversy between spiritual freedom and legal formalism is deep-seated in religious thought. The long history of Jewish ceremonial religion made it extremely difficult for them to comprehend the freedom of the religion of inner impulse of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1ff).

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, therefore, he found himself facing a vigorous "contention" by those who were "of the circumcision." Around this term and the rite, so central in Judaism, the controversy was waged in the churches and in Christianity as a whole. We shall see it at several stages from this on.

The ceremonial party charged that Peter "went in to men lacking circumcision and ate with them," he had associated

with them. 4 But Peter began, and expounded *the matter* unto them in order, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners: and it came even unto me: 6 upon which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw the fourfooted beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the heaven. 7 And I heard also a voice saying unto me, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth. 9 But a voice answered the second time out of heaven, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common. 10 And this was done thrice: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And behold, forthwith three men stood before the house in which we were, having been sent

---

socially with the uncircumcised. While the previous account has not specified that Peter did enjoy heathen hospitality, he does not deny it and all the indications confirm it.

Contenders for traditional regularity show remarkable facility for ignoring the essential matters and pitching controversies on side issues that are at once concrete and bound up in strong prejudices. This appears in most ecclesiastical controversies. The great fact that a considerable number of people had been saved, that a new stage in the Lord's commission had modestly but truly begun, and that the Holy Spirit had unmistakably set his approval on the event is not so much as mentioned by these men who are consumed with the horror that a ceremonial regulation has been violated, although the regulation itself was not commanded in their Bible.

Peter, for defense, recites the simple facts, putting the emphases where the effect will be best. First is the vision of the vessel of unclean animals at Joppa (*verses* 5–10). He urges that the vision was obviously for teaching him, since "the vessel", "came even unto me" (*verse* 5). In the main the account is verbally exactly as in 10: 17ff.

Next was the coincidence of the arrival of the messengers (*verse* 11) "forthwith" ("out of the thing itself.") Then the direct command of the Spirit for him to go with no ques-

from Cæsarea unto me. 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, making no distinction. And these six brethren also accompanied me; and we entered into the man's house: 13 and he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word

---

tion to the contrary (12). Here Peter introduces "these six brethren" who also were "of the circumcision" (10: 45) and whom Peter's foresight had involved with him in the (Jewish) irregularities. He and they did "enter into the man's house," but not for social purposes.

Now he tells how Cornelius told them of his vision and shrewdly includes that Cornelius was instructed to send for Peter to "speak unto him words whereby he should be saved, himself and all his house." Thus Peter gets before them the great fact of the salvation of the "men uncircumcised."

Incidentally also this item in the angel's instruction to Cornelius answers those who are misled or troubled by the fact that good, worshipful men in all nations are acceptable to God. Cornelius himself understood that his acceptance with God thus far involved an opportunity to receive the gospel of salvation, not at all his salvation without the gospel. So far from being an argument against the need for missions it is the basis for missions. Gospel messengers are sent by the Spirit to heathen who are acceptable to God for salvation.

Peter next tells how when he had only well begun what he planned to say the Holy Spirit anticipated him and precipitated him and his six friends into the crisis by "falling on these heathen exactly as upon us (Jews) too at the beginning." Peter says that he then recalled what Jesus had said (Acts 1: 5) about John's baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God had not only accepted them but by the Holy Spirit had approved them as witnesses (see on 1: 7f).

of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized [10]in the Holy Spirit. 17 If then God gave unto them the like gift as *he did* also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? 18 And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.

[10]Or, *with*

Now his conclusion: "If therefore (in this baptism of the Holy Spirit) the equal sovereign gift he gave to them, God did (note the emphatic position of this) as to us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, I, who was I powerful enough to hinder God?"

There is an argument in the facts of Christian history, revealing the presence and approval of God, that ought to convince, and yet which our prejudgments often blind us to, while we go on seeking to oppose what God is really doing. Peter set the matter rightly and strongly.

The gift "unto us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ" (*verse* 17) must refer to their belief in the promise of the Holy Spirit, since they had long before believed on him as Saviour, and we of course understand that Cornelius and his company had believed unto salvation while Peter talked.

(9) The Principle of a Gospel for Gentiles Allowed. *Verse* 18.

Peter's argument, and his witnesses, carried the day. It is interesting to find him the first man answering in discipline before the Jerusalem church; and that he assumes no right of position or authority to decide for himself and the church, but submits his case. There is not an element of papal or episcopal assumption in his conduct nor in the manner of handling his case.

The opposers were at least silenced, "they became quiet," or, in the words of the text, "held their peace;" they even "glorified God," saying in surprise but also in concession: "Then to the Gentiles also did God grant (give) repentance unto life." The perfect tense "hath granted" is not in ac-

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. 20 But there were some of them,

---

cordance with the Greek, nor correct. The perfect would concede an established principle; the aorist which they use concedes the one incident but does not commit them to the principle for permanent application. They allow it now, but will oppose it later, conditionally at least.

4. Planting the Gospel in the Great Heathen City, Antioch. *Verses* 19–30.

Each incident thus far, beginning with chapter 8, leads on toward a general gospel free from Jewish limitations. We are now to take the final step, in actual practice, and so to lead on to the adopting of a definite program involving this principle.

(1) Some Progressive Laymen and Their Lord Win Greeks. *Verses* 19–21.

Resuming the story (see 8: 4) of how "the tribulation" that arose with the mobbing of Stephen, by scattering abroad the witnesses extended the range of the gospel message, the record has now to tell us how messengers went as far as Phœnicia, north of the extremity of Palestine, to the island of Cyprus from which Barnabas had come early and Mnason (21: 16) with probably others less prominent and to Antioch, the Roman capital of Syria and of all her eastern provinces, the third city in size and importance in the empire, a city made up of a large body of Syrians, a multitude of Greeks, a considerable number of Latins connected with government and trade, and a large section of Jews who had here unusual freedom and autonomy in local as in religious administration.

Antioch was soon to become the second great center of Christianity and the home-center of missions to the heathen. Hence the coming of the gospel to Antioch is a fact of first

men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the [1]Greeks also, [2]preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord. 22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church

[1]Many ancient authorities read *Grecian Jews*. See ch. 6. 1.
[2]See marginal note on ch. 5. 42.

---

importance. But the first witnesses spoke "the word to none save only to Jews." "Nicolaüs, a proselyte of Antioch" was already one of the seven deacons at Jerusalem, and may have returned to his native city.

Soon, however, some of them who were natives of Cyprus and of Cyrene (see 13: 1, Lucius, and probably also Symeon Black [Niger] Grecian Jews, up to this time holding no official position in the church), arrived at Antioch and talked boldly to Greeks preaching the good news of (literally, evangelizing) the Lord Jesus. Although the best manuscripts are sharply divided here between Greeks and Hellenists (Jews born and reared outside Palestine), the point of the story so obviously turns on these recipients of the gospel being not only not Jews but not even Gentile proselytes, that we are bound to follow this reading. These bold lay preachers, possibly having caught the cue from Peter's preaching to Cornelius and his company, preached directly to heathen Greeks.

And the Lord showed his approval by showing "his hand" with them, by outward sign of some sort. See exactly the same expression referring to John the Baptist in Luke 1: 66, and connect with Luke 1: 15. The other proof of God's approval was that a great number turned in faith to the Lord, the expression is a little unusual and brings out strongly the fact of the faith of those who turned.

(2) The Jerusalem Church Sends Barnabas to Investigate, and the Holy Spirit is in Him. *Verses* 22–24.

The word (or "account") of this new and significant work reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they must needs look after it. Barnabas had come from that region

which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: 23 who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, [3]that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: 24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25 And

[3]Some ancient authorities read *that they would cleave unto the purpose of their heart in the Lord.*

---

and was a man of large sympathies. To send him "as far as Antioch" would serve to attest the propriety of the new step and to maintain the unity of the church without seeming censorious. That such a man was sent shows that no captious spirit was behind the move, and that he did not return to report and get formal sanction of his decision shows both the full confidence in him and the general spirit of local freedom already arising. Compare 8: 14 and 11: 1 for the general supervision of new movements from Jerusalem.

Barnabas was quick to "see the grace of God" in the new converts and his heart took it in with unrestrained "joy," and he exercised his special gift (which had given him his name, see on 4: 36) by exhorting, or encouraging, all with intelligent heart purpose to cleave to the Lord to whom they had turned.

While we are not told, from the fact that nothing is said of baptism after Barnabas came it is to be assumed that the Greek converts were baptized when they "turned to the Lord."

The ready joy of Barnabas in the new step is explained (*verse* 24) by his being "a good man," kindly and generous in his thought of men; and "full of the Holy Spirit," enabling him to recognize the Spirit's work in others; and full "of faith" in God, which made him trustful of men who turned to the Lord.

So now fresh success in Greek conversions followed and "much people (a considerable crowd) were added to the Lord." See 5: 14 for the same way of saying this.

he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul; 26 and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together [4]with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. 27 Now

[4]Gr. *in.*

---

(3) A Great Meeting with Remarkable Features. *Verses* 25, 26.

The rapid growth of additions to the disciples in a great city, and these from heathenism, with much need for instruction, gave Barnabas a heavy burden. He must have help beyond that of the men who had preceded him to Antioch and who probably were laymen and unable to give all their time to the work.

He went to Tarsus "to look up" Saul, and having found him, brought him to Antioch to help in the work. He had had the insight to discern how Saul's ability could serve the gospel, Saul was a Hellenist and had shown zeal for the Hellenists in Jerusalem (9: 29), he knew this region far better than any of the apostles, and it is practically certain that he had already been preaching to heathen (see 15: 41). So he was the man for this work, and Barnabas "led" him to Antioch, and thus into his great mission.

The outcome ("it came to pass") proved the wisdom of Barnabas' choice of Saul, for this evangelistic campaign under the two great men continued "for a whole year." It included, as every such campaign must if it is worthily conducted, "teaching a large crowd" ("much people").

Another incidental outcome of this work was that for the first time "the disciples" were called "Christians." Disciples was the name used in the days of Jesus, and is the name suggested by his Commission (Matt. 28). The name "Christians" was almost certainly originated by the unbelieving people and is used by Peter long after this (1 Peter 4: 16) as if it were a term used in reproach or contempt. It is found in the New Testament only one other time, in the words of Agrippa to Paul (26: 28). "Were called"

in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem
unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named
Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a
great famine over all [5]the world: which came to pass in

[5]Gr. *the inhabited earth.*

(*verse* 26) represents an unusual word in this sense in Greek It indicates that it was applied because of the busy activity of the disciples in the name of Christ Jesus. The word means "were-called-after-their-business." It is pleasing to find that the name was first given because working in the Christ way seemed to outsiders to be the business of "the disciples." It is no wonder that the name later came to be the usual designation of followers of our Lord. But in the light of New Testament usage it is absurd to insist on it as the only proper designation, and especially to arrogate its use as a denominational name.

(4) By Means of a Prophet the Spirit Weaves a Bond of Sympathy Between Jewish and Greek Believers. *Verses* 27–30.

There was certain to be questioning and opposition among strict Jewish Christians about this reception of Greeks into the organized body without any requirement of Jewish law being imposed upon them. The Holy Spirit, who was promoting the work at Antioch, was also anticipating this opposition and providing against it. "Prophets," men who spoke by direct inspiration and whose great function was to give instruction in the building up of the churches, came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

One of these prophets, Agabus, using some undefined sign (cf. his sign in 21: 11) to enforce his prediction, after the manner of Old Testament prophets, announced that a widespread famine was coming. With some exaggeration for emphasis he said it was to cover "the inhabited earth." Roman historians refer to troubles from famine during the reign of Claudius, and Josephus tells of a severe famine in Palestine between 44 and 48 A.D. It is conceivable also that

the days of Claudius. 29 And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send [6]relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judæa: 30 which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

[6]Gr. *for ministry.* Comp. ch. 6. 1.

Agabus referred only to Palestine, for our report is very meager. Those who heard him understood that the event fulfilled his prediction, "which came to pass, etc."

Here was an opportunity. The Jerusalem saints were poor and would be in much distress when the famine befell. By anticipating and saving up for it, the Antioch "disciples" could "send ministry (deacon-service, cf. the first use of this term for this same sort of helpfulness in chapter 6) to their brothers dwelling in Judæa." This they decided upon. They adopted the principle prescribed by Paul in a much more extensive collection for the same purpose some years later (see 1 Cor. 16: 2; 2 Cor. 8: 12); "every man according to his ability," literally "just as any one prospered."

They did as they had determined, duly sending their gifts of fellowship "by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." Thus they recognized and put into practice the principle of brotherhood (*verse* 29) among all believers, whether in one church and of one race, as in Jerusalem (chapters 2, 4), or in different organizations and of different races. Barnabas had been gone much more than a year on this mission, and on it had definitely given up residence in Jerusalem. He had done things which many of his Judæan brethren would not approve, and, so far as our records inform us, he had made no report of his work or of conditions. He came back now at an opportune moment and brought a practical proof of the faith and fellowship of these Greek Christians that could not but arouse kindly judgment and feeling in the Jewish church. Jew and Gentile were bound together, and in a way that placed Jewish believers under obligations to think favorably of their Gentile "brethren."

In this brief paragraph we meet two new orders in the ministry of the church. "Prophets" as a recognized func-

tion appear for the first time (cf. Eph. 4: 11; 1 Cor. 12: 28). In Ephesians 2: 20 they are coupled with apostles as constituting the foundation of the church. It is still necessary to insist that prediction of future events is only a secondary feature in the work of the prophet. He speaks for God by direct inspiration for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. Occasionally he predicts events.

We meet here also for the first time "elders," or presbyters. It was to them that the money was sent. It is somewhat surprising that it was not sent to the deacons since it was for relief of poverty and the seven of Acts 6 were chosen for just this service. The term, "elders," seems to have arisen to designate all the ministers, possibly all the officers, in the church at Jerusalem, except apostles and prophets. At 14: 23 will be the proper place for a discussion of this office.

5. The Church in Conflict with Civil Power. Chapter 12.

Up to this time all persecution has been on religious grounds and by the ecclesiastical leaders and authorities of Judaism. Now that the new way is gaining a following of Gentiles and is so widely extended, it begins to attract the attention of civil authorities and conflicts begin. They will continue and increase in severity and complexity until the time of Constantine. The union of church and state then did not by any means settle the question of the relation of the two, and to this day the problems remain acute in much of the "Christian world" and in the policy and plans of missionary work.

The principle of a free church in a free state was inherent in Christianity and has been urged with more or less insight through the centuries. In the last one hundred and fifty years, through the urgent insistence of Baptists and the helpful advocacy of others it has been generally recognized in the United States as a principle but its practical application is not yet fully realized.

12 Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And when he

---

And the relations of church and state are by no means fully solved by this single principle. The church is under obligation of helpfulness to the state and in some ways the state can reciprocate in helpfulness without in either case violating the freedom inherently to be claimed and allowed for each.

(1) Herod Slays James and Prepares to Slay Peter. *Verses* 1–4.

This Herod was a grandson of Herod the Great, who was in power at the time of the birth of Jesus. He was largely brought up at Rome and was a prodigal friend and flatterer of the great there, especially of Caligula. When Caligula became emperor he made Herod, known also as Agrippa I, king of the territory formerly ruled by Philip and Lysanias (see Luke 3: 1), to which was later added the territory of Antipas. By his shrewdness he succeeded also in winning the favor of Claudius when he became emperor, 41 A.D., and all Palestine was now included in his kingdom and was reunited for the first time after the death of Herod the Great.

Worldly, wicked and indifferent to religion in Rome, Herod in Palestine assumed zeal for the Jewish faith and laws. The manner of James' death shows that some political charge was preferred against him, probably disloyalty, which might easily arise against any Christian at a time when emperor-worship was being urged upon the people.

The events here fall between those of 11: 27–29 and the sending of the money (verse 25). On how many "of the church" Herod "imposed hardship" or even slew we cannot know. James was John's older brother and with Peter the three made up the most intimate group of our Lord's followers. He is the first apostle, so far as known, to suffer death. It is well to recall Jesus' words to him and John, in Matthew 20: 20ff.

saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And *those* were the days of unleavened bread. 4 And when he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people. 5 Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him. 6 And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell: and he smote Peter on the side, and

---

It is remarkable how brief a notice is made of the martyr death of an apostle. Men were not glorified in the early church; and death was put in its proper place of relative insignificance in the Christian system and thought.

On seeing that the slaughter of James made him popular with the Jews, Herod "added to arrest (in the Hebraic phrase) even Peter," the recognized head of the church. But with strict formal observance of the sanctity of the Passover week, he postponed the execution until this was past, when he planned "to bring him forth to the people." Recall that the authorities had decided to delay their assault on Jesus, for fear of the people, until Judas came forward with his plan (Mark 14: 1ff).

Meantime Peter is guarded by four sets of four soldiers, each four taking "a watch" of six hours. Two would remain in the prison, chained to Peter, while one guarded each gate, inner and outer. Possibly previous experience (5: 19ff) with Peter in prison suggested this severe caution.

(2) Prayer Prevents the Plan. *Verses* 5–19.

Here we meet two forces, official hate and determination using guards and a prison; prayer eager in its petition before God with reference to Peter.

The time was at hand, tomorrow the execution. Peter sleeps between the soldiers while at the door (or gate) the guards stand. "And behold," an angel of the Lord takes his stand by Peter, the cell is lighted up mysteriously. The

awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed; and he knew not that it was true which was done [7]by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and straightway the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of

[7]Gr. *through.*

---

angel gives Peter a stroke in the side and lifts him up, directing each step. He tells Peter to get up "in quickness," and, as the chains drop from his wrists, to gird himself and bind on (under) his sandals. When Peter "did so," the angel gave the next direction, "Throw your cloak around you and follow me." Peter followed each direction like a man in a sleep or hyponotized, with no autonomy. "He did not know that what was coming to pass by means of the angel was actual, but seemed to be looking at a vision."

Having got past both guards, they came to "the gate, the iron one, the one admitting into the city." The emphasis of the order makes the more striking the fact that it opened "of itself" (the Greek is "automatically") for them. Out in the city they went one square together, when "at once the angel stepped away from him," leaving Peter there in the street alone and bewildered. How futile is any thought of an "explanation" of this occurrence! There are no terms but the supernatural for it, and these do not "explain," they only relate, but the power is more than equal to the product.

Peter soon came round to a wakeful realization that "his Lord (Jesus) actually had sent his angel and drawn him out of Herod's hand and out of the Jewish people's expectation" (*verse* 11).

the people of the Jews. 12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying. 13 And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer, named Rhoda. 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was even so. And they said, It

---

As soon as he could "see-things-together," Peter went to the home of Mary, whose son John was a young man of promise and importance in Christian service and who under his Latin name, Mark, was destined to play a large part in the history of the kingdom. This was one of at least five Marys that are worthily known in the Jerusalem church. She seems to have been a widow, with some means, like Barnabas (4: 36f) her kinsman (Col. 4: 14).

At Mary's house there were "many" ("a considerable number") collected in prayer. It is easy to sympathize with the conduct of Rhoda, the maid who went to answer Peter's knock at the gate. "Distinctly recognizing" Peter's voice, her joy made her forget to open the gate, but she ran in with the announcement that he was before the gate. It is not very complimentary to their faith that those inside said unto her, "You are crazy." On her part she "strongly reiterated" "that it was even so" ("that it had itself that way," is the Greek idiom). Now they suggest that it was "Peter's angel." Whether they believed in guardian angels or had an idea something like that suggested by our term "ghost" we cannot tell. The Jews in the centuries just preceding the incarnation had elaborated a system of belief in angels and of their relations to men, and we find Paul combating a similar theory, more elaborate still, among Gentiles also in some of his churches. These early Christians may have had some crude notions on the subject. Many have still.

Meantime Peter "kept-at-it knocking." When they finally came to open the gate and saw him "they were amazed"

is his angel. 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed. 17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place. 18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he

---

("they were ecstatic," literally "stood out of themselves"). Peter hadn't long to tarry, so he quieted them with a sign of his hand and told them the story; how the Lord led him out of the prison. *Verse* 4 says Herod was planning to "lead him *up* to the people," *verse* 6 that he was just about "to lead him *forth*," now Peter says the Lord "led him *out*," the difference lying only in the prepositions compounded with the verb.

James was not present at this meeting, nor "the brethren" which may well mean "the elders" (cf. 11: 30), but it is not at all necessary to suppose, with some, that James was not in the city. Peter asked them to report the matters to these brethren and he left for "a different place," our curiosity concerning which we cannot satisfy. There is no ground for the claim of Catholics, and some others, that he now went to Rome.

This account comes to us with all the vivid realism of one present. Either Peter or Mark (more probably) gave it to Luke in this way.

The James of this paragraph is the Lord's brother, whom Peter recognizes as the leader now, probably the chief elder or as writers usually say, "President of the presbyters" in Jerusalem.

But now (*verses* 18f) we are directed to the soldiers at the prison, among whom "there was no small stir" over the question, "What then (in the light of all the strange facts) Peter had got to be?" It was a very serious matter for them, for when a thorough search was made for Peter under Herod's direction, he had the four guards on duty at the

examined the guards, and commanded that they should be [6]put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and tarried there.

20 Now he was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: and they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was fed from the king's country. 21 And upon a set day Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel, and sat on the [9]throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people shouted, *saying*, The

[6]Gr. *lead away to death.* [9]Or, *judgment-seat* See Mt. 27. 19.

---

time, certainly, possibly the entire sixteen, examined and condemned them to death. Herod now left Judæa (Jerusalem), where he had gone for the feast and to humor the Jews by treating the Holy City as a secondary capital, and went down to Cæsarea, the official capital.

(3) A Blasphemous King Falls Under Judgment. *Verses* 20–23.

For some reason Herod had "a hot controversy" with the people of Tyre and Sidon. These commercial cities were dependent for their food supply, especially grain, upon Herod's territory, and so were anxious to be on peaceable terms with him. Uniting in their purpose ("with one accord") they came, by embassy, of course, to Cæsarea and persuaded Herod's chamberlain, one Blastus, whose position indicated great influence, to support their cause. In view of the classic usage of the word for "persuade," we are to understand that they bribed him. Thus they got a public hearing.

Herod came in great state. Josephus describes the scene with brilliant circumstance, and says it was the second day of the Greek games, which had been introduced here. He also tells that the "royal apparel" of the occasion included a robe entirely of cloth of silver, that glistened wonderfully in the rays of the sun. He "made an oration" unto the Tyreans and Sidonians. The audience, including these, eager to flatter his pride shouted: "A god's voice and not a

voice of a god, and not of a man. 23 And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned [10]from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

[10]Many ancient authorities read *to Jerusalem.*

---

man's." The emperors were now claiming and being acclaimed to be divine, and Herod accepts the same foolish adulation. The people said only "a god," not "God." But this half-Jew who professed to be a worshiper of the only God should have recoiled from any such blasphemy and have given all "glory to (the) God." Because he did not, "immediately (right alongside the event) an angel of the Lord smote him." This does not exclude the idea that his stroke was the natural outcome of his dissipations, the culmination of a horrible disease. The Greek is very expressive, almost revolting, "having gotten to be worm-eaten he breathed out his life." Luke's summary statement is not inconsistent with that of Josephus, that the end came five days later, for Josephus tells of the fatal stroke here in the theater before all the people.

(4) God's Work Prospers. *Verses* 24, 25.

Two items remain to complete this section of the Acts. In spite of persecution, in the power of God the work prospers. The Word of the Lord went on increasing and being multiplied (the tenses are imperfect, expressing a continued course).

It is partly because of the historical order that the statement comes here concerning Barnabas' and Saul's return to Jerusalem; partly also because the literary and logical effect is better by thus leading up to the epochal step next to be recorded, and in which these two men become the chief agents. When they had completed the ministry (deacon-service) of the bounty of the Antioch saints (11: 30), they returned to Antioch, taking along with them John, who

had got to be called Mark, for what reason we are not told. The name may have been applied to him only when he began working among Gentiles. His kinship to Barnabas (cf. at *verse* 12) would be one reason for taking him.

We shall now turn to the third stage of the Commission, the second has been traversed.

III. Witnessing Unto the Uttermost Part of the Earth. Chapters 13–28.

As an alternate caption for this section we might adopt: Covering the Empire with the Knowledge of the Saviour. Sir W. M. Ramsay has shown how this was Paul's ambition, although we must think that his idea was even more comprehensive and that he looked upon himself as inaugurating a universal proclamation of the gospel that would issue in "the fulness of the Gentiles" and the consummation of the gospel age.

From this point onward the story moves in the thought, not of reaching out from Jerusalem and Jewish Christianity, but of preaching to man as man and with no dependent reference to any one center that has any authoritative or sacred control over the work.

Up to this time Jerusalem has naturally been the central city and the headquarters of the (at first undivided) church of Palestine. We have seen the Antioch church arise as an independent body, but with care on the part both of Jerusalem and of Antioch to relate the two great churches in fraternal unity, an effort to be continued in the period now to be studied. But Antioch is a new center for the propagation of the gospel. Every great cosmopolitan church should be such a center.

1. The Holy Spirit Inaugurates a Definite Plan for Reaching the Heathen. 13: 1–4a.

We have seen how the Spirit has led the witnesses by advancing stages into direct preaching to Greeks. On his part a definite plan has been unfolding all along and the

13 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there,* prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 And

---

history organizes itself as a record of that plan. On the part of the disciples it has been merely yielding to a present call or impulse of the Spirit. Now he takes them into his confidence, reveals the plan and sets them definitely to work to realize it in his power. Such also was the method of Jesus, who led his Twelve far into his plans before revealing them fully (cf. John 15: 15).

In Antioch connected with the church were prophets and teachers, whether two offices or, more probably, two functions exercised by the same men, is not wholly clear. The Greek particles suggest the first three as prophets, the last two as teachers. Thus for the new work there would be a prophet and a teacher. But the suggestion is too subtle to be conclusive, and there is nothing against both functions being exercised by all five men. Barnabas and Saul we know already. Symeon is a Hebrew name and his cognomen Black (Niger) is not against the idea. Lucius was a Hellenist of Cyrene, Manaen (Hebrew, Menahen) had been brought up with Herod Antipas, the one who slew John the Baptist, either as his companion in education or because Manaen's mother was the royal nurse. In either case the connection is honorable. Luke frequently takes note of such distinction in Christian converts. Recall (Luke 8: 2) that the wife of Herod's chamberlain was a member of the sisterhood that supported the work of Jesus.

While these five, probably with the church, were discharging the ministry of worship and fasting, they received the significant message of the Holy Spirit. He would naturally speak through one of the prophets. Christian fasting was not formal nor (as a rule) on fixed occasions, but indicated grief or intense earnestness (Mark 2: 19f). One wonders whether these men were thinking eagerly of new fields for gospel expansion. Already the Holy Spirit had

as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And

---

in purpose, if not in revelation to them, called Barnabas and Saul for a special work and now directs their specific designation to it. It was a distinct division of workers and the inauguration of a definitely understood campaign for evangelizing the heathen peoples.

After fasting and prayer and laying on of hands, they dismissed the two for their work. The "they" here has for its logical antecedent only the "prophets and teachers," but we can hardly imagine that the church took no part in it. The whole body had shared in the appointment of Matthias, and these missionaries will call all the church together, when they return, to hear of their work (14: 27). To insist that it was a "church mission" would be to go quite "beyond what is written."

The ordination (a term never used in Scripture of the laying on of hands) of Barnabas and Paul has difficulties from our modern point of view. Both men had long been in the full ministry and Paul insists (Gal. 1) that human agency had no part in making him an apostle. It is suggested that it was the new movement of foreign missions here inaugurated in these two men that was thus formally approved by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and that the ordination symbolized the special gifts of the Spirit which were needed for the mission and which we find the missionaries using.

Verse 4 emphasizes that they were "sent out by the Holy Spirit" and "therefore went down to Seleucia," the seaport of Antioch, to sail on the new mission. His sending is the really important matter.

when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant. 6 And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain [1]sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the [1]sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood

[1]Gr. *Magus:* as in Mt. 2. 1, 7, 16.

---

2. The Spirit Leads the Missionaries on an Extended Tour, Inaugurating the Work. 13: 4—14: 28.

The journey lasted from one to three years (45–48) and, besides Cyprus, covered the chief city centers of south central Asia Minor.

(1) Begin at Cyprus, the Home of Barnabas. 13: 4–12.

Cyprus, besides being the former home of Barnabas, lay in the way to central Asia Minor. We shall see (15: 41) that the eastern part of southern Asia Minor had already been evangelized. At the important city of Salamis they found so many Jews that there were several synagogues where the missionaries spoke "the word of God." They would have both Jews and devout Gentiles for hearers.

For a helper they had John (Mark). The word for helper suggests that he attended to subordinate duties but would not exclude him from a share in the preaching, baptizing, etc. *Verse* 13 suggests also other attendants.

As this mission is definitely a Gentile mission, Luke hurries by the work in Salamis and does not tell at all what was done as "they passed through the whole island (about a hundred miles) unto Paphos," the capital. Here they came into their definite work in a striking way. They found a man who was a magician and falsely claimed inspiration as a prophet. He was a Jew with the suggestive name Son of Joshua, or Jesus, i. e., Son of the (or a) Saviour. He had also another (Greek?) name, Elymas, the meaning of which is not known. He was a man of so much ability

them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith. 9 But Saul, who is also *called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, 10 and said, O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the

---

in his line that the proconsul, although "a man of insight," had taken him into his attendance. Sergius' insight had shown him the folly of Roman paganism and he was seeking light. There were in those days many, honest and dishonest, teachers of religion, to whom eager men turned in hope or in despair.

Barnabas and Saul attracted attention by their new teaching and the proconsul sent for them. Bar-Jesus feared for his position, and when Sergius sought to hear from the missionaries God's Word he set himself against them in the effort to divert the proconsul from "the faith" which they were urging upon him in Christ Jesus. Saul was led by special impulse of the Holy Spirit to stop the mouth of Elymas, to impose upon him a punishment that would demonstrate his hypocrisy and selfishness and would confirm to the proconsul the approval of God on the truth he and Barnabas were preaching. This case of Elymas Magus is very similar to that of Simon Magus, only there no physical ill was immediately imposed. Thus Saul was also shown to be chosen to "bind and loose" on earth.

His words to Elymas are severely searching: "O thou full of every trick and every (form of) fraud," referring to his practices; "son of the devil," referring to his motive and disposition; "enemy of all (every form of) righteousness," the effect of his character and conduct; "will you not cease turning aside (confusing) the ways of the Lord (cf. Hosea 14: 9) that are straight? And (as a result) now see! The hand of the Lord is upon thee (in punishment, the same expression is used when it is blessing, see 11: 21)." Saul states the blindness positively and negatively. It is to be

sun [2]for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departed from them

[2]Or, *until*

---

temporary, "until a fit time." It was instant. Mist and darkness fell upon him and "wandering about he was seeking hand-leaders," to give the graphic statement literally.

The amazement of the proconsul at the occurrence helped in his belief "upon" the teaching of the Lord. "Hand of the Lord" and "ways of the Lord" in the paragraph are Old Testament expressions and Jehovah is thought of; "truth of the Lord" is the truth concerning Jesus.

For a long while it was charged that Luke was in error in calling the governor of Cyprus "proconsul," since the island was under military rule of the emperor and so governed by a "proprætor." In the latter part of the last century absolute proof was found of Luke's accuracy. For a few years, including the time of this event, the form of control was changed and a proconsul was in charge.

From this time on Saul's name is given as Paul. The reason probably is that in the Roman world among Gentiles his Latin name would be more advantageous than his Jewish name. The change is fittingly noted from this first experience with a Roman official, but it is an unworthy idea that he took the name from Sergius Paulus. From now on, except at Jerusalem, Paul is recognized as the leader of the work.

(2) At Perga John (Mark) Leaves Them. 13: 13.

"Paul and his company" would naturally be more than three men, although no others are named. They went to Perga in the province of Pamphylia, where John, left and returned to Jerusalem. We do not know why. Paul thought badly of him for it, but speculation at this distance is useless.

and returned to Jerusalem. 14 But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. 16 And Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand said,

---

(3) Thrilling Experiences in Antioch (in Pisidia). *Verses* 14–52.

Going through the country and over the range of the Tautus mountains, they are now in the region to which Paul seems to apply the term Galatia. Here we shall later find the Galatian churches whose founding dates from this journey. The name is from a migration of Gauls that came into central Asia Minor nearly three hundred years before this. Their central seat was farther north, but after much controversy and research there is left little room for doubt that "the churches of Galatia" are those whose founding we are now to study.

a. First Preach to the Jews with Success (*verses* 4–43).

Where there are Jews the gospel must always be preached to them. This is God's plan. These Jewish preachers would be more at home with their own race. In the synagogues they would find Gentiles in whose hearts a way for the gospel had been prepared. They went modestly in on their first sabbath and took a seat in the synagogue. After the regular reading of the Law and the Prophets—a lesson from each section—those in control of the worship sent an attendant to the visitors if there was in them "any word of exhortation unto the people" (Jews primarily) to invite that they should speak.

This sermon may be well compared to those of Peter, and especially with that of Stephen, which Paul had heard. Paul is the preacher now. He hurriedly sketches the history of the Jews, quoting frequently from the Old Testament, so as to bring out God's plan and promise (*verses* 16–22). Then he shows how the great basal promise was fullfilled in Jesus;

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken: 17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm led he them forth out of it. 18 And for about the time of forty years [3]as a nursing father bare he them in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave *them* their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years: 20 and after these things he gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they asked for a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king; to whom also he bare witness and said, [4]I have found

[3]Many ancient authorities read *suffered he their manners in the wilderness*. See Dt. 9. 7.
[4]1 S. xiii. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 20.

---

tells of the resurrection and its witnesses, and then confirms it by use of the Scriptures (*verses* 23–37). Finally he offers remission of sins through Jesus on repentance, and solemnly warns the people not to subject themselves to the judgment announced in Hab 1: 5 (*verses* 38–41).

The address begins, "Gentlemen, Israelites" (*verse* 16), but after that (*verses* 26, 38) the more sympathetic and persuasive "Gentlemen, brothers" (not merely "brethren") is employed. The first form of address is extended so as to include all who "feared (reverently) God," whether Jews or not, and they are included in the "brethren" later. It is for this reason that the Jews are called "*this* people Israel" in *verse* 17.

Attention is directed to the deliverance from Egypt (*verse* 17), the tender care in the wilderness (*verse* 18), the supplanting of the seven "nations" of Canaan for the Israelites (*verse* 19), the delivering judges (*verse* 20), until Samuel was given as a prophet as well as judge (*verse* 20). Then, in speaking of Saul, a suggestion of the rebelliousness of the people is first made (*verse* 21), but no special attention is called to it, except when it is said that God removed him in favor of David whom he had found for a king on the basis of God's heart (one of his choice) who

David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall
do all my [5]will. 23 Of this man's seed hath God according
to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus; 24 when
John had first preached [6]before his coming the baptism of
repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John was
fulfilling his course, he said, What suppose ye that I am?
I am not *he*. But behold, there cometh one after me the
shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose. 26 Brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you
that fear God, to us is the word of this salvation sent forth.
27 For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets
which are read every sabbath, fulfilled *them* by condemning
him. 28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*,
yet asked they of Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And
when they had fulfilled all things that were written of
him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a
tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead: 31 and he was
seen for many days of them that came up with him from
Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses unto the
people. 32 And we bring you good tidings of the promise
made unto the fathers, 33 that God hath fulfilled the same
unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is

[5]Gr. *wills.* [6]Gr. *before the face of his entering in.*

---

would do all the things God willed (*verse* 22). Here Paul proceeds immediately to Jesus as the Saviour out of David's seed whom God brought to Israel according to promise. The use Paul makes of John is skillful. He preceded Jesus as a prophet, proclaiming the coming of the Greater One and preaching to the whole people a baptism that professed and symbolized repentance (*verses* 24f). Paul is now about to call his hearers to repentance in this Name. To his brethren of the stock of Abraham and to all God-fearing men this salvation is brought, "For" by killing him "they that dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers" "had fulfilled all things that were written of him." This they did, to be sure, because they did not recognize either him or the voices of the prophets which were read to them every sabbath (*verse* 27), a pointed suggestion to the present congregation. Here God came in and by the resurrection of Jesus completed his promise and made it available for "our children" (*verse* 33).

written in the second psalm, [7]Thou art my Son, this day
have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised
him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, [8]I will give you the holy
and sure *blessings* of David. 35 Because he saith also in
another *psalm*, [9]Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see
corruption. 36 For David, after he had [10]in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto
his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 but he whom God raised
up saw no corruption. 38 Be it known unto you therefore,
brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: 39 and by him every one that believeth is
justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest that
come upon *you* which is spoken in the prophets:

41 [1]Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and [2]perish:
For I work a work in your days,
A work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare
it unto you.

42 And as they went out, they besought that these words
might be spoken to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when

[7]Ps. ii. 7. [8]Is. lv. 3. [9]Ps. xvi. 10.
[10]Or, *served his own generation by the counsel of God, fell asleep* Or, *served his own generation, fell asleep by the counsel of God*
[1]Hab. 1. 5. [2]Or, *vanish away* Jas. 4. 14.

That the promises were fulfilled in Jesus and that the resurrection was God's seal of him as Saviour, Paul proves by quotations from Psalm 2 (*verse* 33), Isaiah 55 (*verse* 34), Psalm 16 (*verse* 35), using the same line of argument Peter followed on Pentecost.

Now the climax (*verses* 38ff): Through this man remission of sins is offered and justification from all things. The law could not justify but Jesus could. He does not supplement the law of Moses but achieves what it could not. In this first recorded sermon of Paul we find the key doctrine of justification through faith in Jesus. Faith fulfills the law by doing what it aimed at.

Upon the close of the day's worship the people expressed their appreciation by earnest entreaty that this message be spoken to them the next sabbath, or the phrase may mean "during the week," which would not really conflict with

the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of [3]God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and [4]blasphemed. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*,

[3]Many ancient authorities read *the Lord.* [4]Or, *railed.*

---

verse 44 and would help understand Paul's quick turning from the Jews on the next sabbath.

The best outcome was that many of both Jews and godly proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas. The word may mean followed to their lodgings or may signify followed as religious teachers. In either case the missionaries "persuaded them to continue to depend on God's grace."

b. Rejected by Jews, They Turn to Gentiles with Great Success. Verses 44–49.

By the next sabbath the new doctrine had produced such a sensation that "almost the whole city" came to hear the preachers. This popularity and the mingling of promiscuous crowds in a religious meeting aroused the bitter jealousy of the Jews. They antagonized Paul's teachings and Luke says they "blasphemed." Thus the charge against Jesus and his followers is now made against those who speak against the name of Jesus.

Both apostles joined in a bold declaration that while it was their duty first to speak the Word of God to Jews, by thrusting it aside they had put themselves under judgment as unworthy, and in consequence the apostles were turning to the Gentiles. They justified their course by quoting (Isaiah 49: 6) from one of the most clear and detailed Messianic chapters in all the prophets. If Jews would not accept the Saviour they must not be allowed to hinder his

[5]I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles,
That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.

48 And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of [6]God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region. 50 But the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against

[5]Many ancient authorities read *the Lord.* [6]Is. xlix. 6.

---

shining upon the nations and extending his salvation to "the uttermost part of the earth." That the missionaries' decision was timely is shown by the joyous reception on the part of the Gentiles and by the outcome, the immediate conversion of "as many as were ordained to eternal life," and the spreading abroad throughout all that region of the Word of the Lord.

To Jews the gospel has usually been presented as "the word of God," to Gentiles (*verses* 48 [margin] 49) it is "the word of the Lord," the word that God sends and the word that tells of the Lord Jesus.

God had some ready here for eternal life, not that all the elect in Antioch believed at this time so that no other believers were ever won there. By Jewish influence and other means some "were drawn up in order" (it is a military term) ready to march over at the call of the gospel into the region of redemption.

The usual process is found here, converts are won in the city and from that center the surrounding territory is evangelized. Visits to the villages and towns by the workers are included as a rule and probably here.

c. Driven Out, They Leave Joy and the Holy Spirit in the Disciples. Verses 50–52.

A body of "disciples," learners, was gathered. The Jews were not idle. Unable themselves to stop the work, they aroused the women of high standing who attended their synagogue and with this help set the city authorities to per-

Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

14 And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews that were disobedient stirred up the souls

---

secute Paul and Barnabas. What suffering was inflicted Luke does not delay to tell us (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 24), but they were driven out of this province, or section. In going away they symbolically "shook off the dust of their feet against" their persecutors (cf. Mark 10: 14, etc.). Great responsibility rests upon the authorities and other influential persons for what they allow and disallow in a city or country.

In going away the missionaries left their disciples glad because full of the Holy Spirit, which means that some of his "gifts" were evident in the new church.

(4) A Great Multitude of Jews and Greeks Won at Iconium. 14: 1–6.

Turning eastward, the next large city was Iconium, on the border of Lycaonia, already a rival of Antioch in population and importance, and soon to become the chief city of all this section. Here the population was largely heathen, and the missionaries would find a new native language spoken, while many would be able to understand Greek and Latin. Luke's account intentionally summarizes the facts of their work here. Instead of "entered together" (*verse* 1), we ought certainly to translate "the same thing," so that the verse will read, "In Iconium it came to pass according to the same thing (as in Antioch), etc." Their experiences in the two places were similar. They began in the synagogue and their efforts won "of both Jews and Greeks a great multitude."

Many Jews still disbelieved and they aroused and embittered the souls of the Gentile population "against the

of the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren. 3 Long time therefore they tarried *there* speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was made an onset both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them, 6 they became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the region round about: 7 and there they [7]preached the gospel.

[7]See marginal note on ch. 5. 42.

---

brethren," who thus already constituted a distinct group in the city. Because of their success and of the opposition ("therefore") Paul and Barnabas remained ("delayed") there a "long time," by their boldness giving the work a firm foundation. The Lord manifested his presence and gave support by "signs and wonders." They "spoke boldly upon the Lord" and he "gave witness upon the word of his grace," to express it in the Greek idiom.

Their courage and miracles won sympathy and the populace was divided between the two parties. The situation grew intense. Then both elements got together and enlisted the rulers in an attempt to "insult" and stone the apostles. The violence of the opposition is shown in the flight across the border into the province of Lycaonia, where they went into its two chief cities and also into the surrounding country. Either other leaders besides the apostles and their attendants would thus seem to have fled, or the statement looks forward and summarizes their further work as covering this territory.

(5) A Miracle, a Misunderstanding, and a Stoning at Lystra. 14: 7–20a.

The general statement of *verse* 7, "There they were evangelizing," or "preaching glad tidings" is applied first to Lystra, where a Roman colony held sway in a primitive heathen community. The work was helped forward by a miraculous mercy in healing a man who had never been able

8 And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his
feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had
walked. 9 The same heard Paul speaking: who, fastening
his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made
whole, 10 said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy
feet. And he leaped up and walked. 11 And when the mul-
titude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice,
saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down
to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas,
[8]Jupiter; and Paul [9]Mercury, because he was the chief
speaker. 13 And the priest of Jupiter whose *temple* was be-
fore the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and
would have done sacrifice with the multitudes. 14 But when

[8]Gr. *Zeus.* [9]Gr. *Hermes.*

to walk. This man sat in one of Paul's audiences so eagerly listening as to attract his attention, and it was given Paul to discern in the man faith to be healed. Giving him an intent look and shocking him into energetic response by "a loud voice," Paul commanded him to stand, "Stand upon thy feet upright," said Paul. The man "jumped up and began walking."

"Crowds" were already attracted to the visitors and their message. This deed amazed them and "they lifted up their voice," but spoke in their native speech, which the missionaries did not understand, and so did not discover for some time the startling impression they had made.

These people had substituted, in name at least, the Greek gods for their own. Visits from the gods were supposed to occur upon occasion. They concluded that this was such a visit. Barnabas, older, more reserved and doubtless more imposing, they took to be the chief god, Zeus (Latin, Jupiter). Paul, younger, quick and active, doing most of the talking, they identified with Hermes (Latin, Mercurius), the Messenger of Zeus and of other gods. Zeus' temple stood outside one of the city gates, and its priest at once arranged for a sacrifice. "With the multitudes" in enthusiastic following the priest came with bulls and garlands before the gates (of the city or of the temple, possibly in the space between the two) wishing to offer them sacrifice.

the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like [10]passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: 16 who in the generations gone by suffered all the [1]nations to walk in their own ways. 17 And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from the heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.

[10]Or, *nature* [1]Or, *Gentiles* See ch. 4. 25.

Here Barnabas is once more mentioned first, as he is the chief god in the eyes of the heathen and must take the lead. When at length they heard what was doing, they were greatly agitated. They may have gone to lodgings and have been unaware of the proceedings for a time, or they may have seen it all but only now "heard" what was intended. They acted with prompt energy. They came, tearing their garments asunder to signify their horror, leaped into the midst of the multitude and dissuaded them. Their address has the points that were more fully developed in the quieter surroundings at Athens (chapter 17). They were not gods at all, but men with the same nature as the Lycaonians. They were indeed messengers with good tidings; they would turn the people away from "these vanities" (the old Hebrew word for idols and heathen gods), and introduce them to a true God, the maker of all things. God had allowed men in the past "to walk in their own ways." Yet he had in the very mercies of nature's blessed provision given to all men a witness of his presence, his love, and grace.

Even with this earnest appeal and true teaching, the missionaries were scarcely able "to cause the multitudes to cease" so as "not to offer sacrifice to them."

Since these strangers were only men, the Lystrans, after they had been disappointed, would quite naturally feel a sense of disgust with having been so foolish. They were a

19 But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 But as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And when they had [2]preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they

[2]Gr. *brought the good things.* Comp. ch. 5. 42.

---

ready prey for persecuting Jews who came on from Antioch and Iconium, so that they at least acquiesced when the Jews stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city for dead. In this city they were not scrupulous to get their victim outside first, as in the case of Stephen at Jerusalem. The Jews had no scruples here, and if the heathen had any, their temple itself was outside the walls.

"The learners" of the Christian way surrounded the body of Paul in grief and suspense, when he surprised them by getting up. Nothing in the text, nor in Paul's later references, indicates that this was a miracle. That he was able to "enter into the city" after such a stoning shows at least God's power in him, and it seems quite remarkable that he was able the next day to go on to Derbe, thirty miles. As he went through this experience, how he must have been thinking of Stephen! Their Lord, his and Stephen's, had a different plan for Paul.

(6) Many Disciples Made at Derbe. *Verses* 20b–21a.

Parts of two sentences summarize the story of Derbe. "They evangelized that city," with the result that "they made learners of a considerable number." It was one more success for the Lord.

(7) Revisiting the Churches for Confirming and Organizing. *Verses* 21b–24.

At Derbe it was but a hundred and sixty miles by Roman highway to Tarsus, and Paul would no doubt gladly have gone on home. But the newly organized churches need further attention that they may be permanent and stable. Back

returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, 22 confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. 24 And they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; 26 and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. 27

---

over their route, then, the missionaries go. Luke emphasizes each city; "they turned back into Lystra, and into Iconium, and into Antioch." Their work in each city was inspiring and solemn; they gave stability to the souls of the learners, exhorted them to abide in the faith, made it clear that entering into God's kingdom is necessarily attended by persecution, which we must be prepared to endure, designated for them presbyters (elders) in every church, so that they would have the needful leadership, held a season of prayer and fasting in which all were committed to the keeping of the Lord, into vital relations with whom they had come by faith.

In "appointing" elders, the missionaries probably held a popular vote under their own direction. The word primarily meant "vote by show of hand," but had come to be used generally of choice by designating. Its use here in the older sense would correspond with 1: 26, and with the democratic ideal of the New Testament.

Out of Pisidia they came into Pamphylia, the coast province.

(8) Preaching in Perga. *Verse* 25.

Here it is noted that they "spoke (informally, as it would seem) the word in Perga," where no mention of any preaching on the outward journey is made (13: 14).

They seem to have gone quickly to Attalia and not to have paused there.

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And they tarried no little time with the disciples.

(9) Return to Antioch (Syria) and "Rehearsal of All Things that God had Done with Them." *Verses* 26–28.

Cyprus was not visited on the way. They went direct to Antioch, "whence," in the fine phrase of Luke, "they had been turned over to the grace of God for the work which they fully executed," a statement which suggests much as to source, condition and duty of success. They gathered together the church and made a report of their work so as to show that it was God who had really worked "with them," and brought out the definite conclusion that "God had now opened to the Gentiles a door of faith." At Jerusalem, some years earlier (11: 18), it had been allowed that "God gave to Gentiles repentance for life." Now the missionaries declare that a door into the kingdom is opened for them, and it is a "door of faith," not of ceremonial or of racial accident.

The "report" of Paul and Barnabas to the church was not technically official. Exactly the same statement is made of the report at Jerusalem (15: 4). At various places in Syria and Samaria on the way to Jerusalem they "declared the conversion of the Gentiles" (15: 3), where a different verb is used. At Antioch and at Jerusalem the story was told to churches and their officers in a semi-official way, their approval being needed for unity, harmony and sympathy in the expanding work. And here, in these two cities, they "rehearsed all things that God had done with them," whereas, at the other places it was simply the fact of "the conversion (turning) of the Gentiles" that they recounted.

In the goodly fellowship of the Antioch disciples, so many of whom had been led to discipleship by them, Paul and Barnabas lingered "time not a little." Such periods of sojourn at home by missionaries invigorate them, stimulate the churches and establish the unity of the saints.

15 And certain men came down from Judæa and taught the brethren, *saying*, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension, and questioning with them, *the brethren* appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. 3 They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through

---

3. Agreeing on the Gospel for Gentiles. 15: 1–33.

(1) Demand of the Judaizers. *Verse* 1.

There were some who came down from Judæa and busied themselves "teaching the brethren (Gentiles) that unless they committed themselves to the Law of Moses by circumcision they could not be saved." This teaching was squarely against the "door of faith" theory that already maintained in Antioch and to which Paul and Barnabas were fully committed.

(2) A Deputation to Jerusalem "About this Question." *Verses* 2, 3.

Of course Paul and Barnabas would make not a little opposition ("standing") and question against such teachers. So it was "arranged" that Paul and Barnabas and some others should "go before the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem about it." We cannot think at all that this was to have their conduct passed on decisively. Paul leaves us in no doubt (Gal. 1–2) that he was not thinking of any possible change in his course. For the sake of a right attitude of all Christians and for the sake of unity this council was held. Paul had a special revelation leading to this (Gal. 2: 2). They were accordingly "sent forward by the church." This phrase here seems to mean by authority and sanction of the church, and in 20: 38; 21: 5, it means "attended by." To be brought on one's way, in the writings of Paul (five times), and John (once), always means to have the expenses of one's journey paid. (See Romans 15: 24; 1 Cor. 16: 6, 11; 2 Cor. 1: 16; Tit. 3: 13; 3 John 6.)

both Phœnicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and the elders were gathered together

It was a joyous story they had to tell to "all the brethren" along the way, "the turning (to the Lord) of the Gentiles."

(3) Reception, Report, and Demand Renewed. *Verses* 4, 5.

The whole church joined with the apostles and elders in a reception to the missionaries to hear their story. It was not intended that the matter in controversy should be introduced at this meeting (Gal. 2: 2). But the Pharisaic element in the church could not wait. They were too concerned for their conception of orthodox regularity to rejoice in the story of conversions that violated their prejudices, exalted into principles. So they arose (literally, "stood up out") in meeting to press their demand.

(4) A Conference of Leaders. *Verse* 6, and Gal. 2: 1–10.

The leaders dismissed the meeting and a conference of "apostles and elders" was held with the Antioch deputation, in which the matter was thoroughly gone into. The subsequent account shows clearly that a decision was reached and a program planned for the open meeting. Such conferences are quite necessary for wise and safe conclusions, but great care is needed to prevent their becoming improper caucuses.

Paul had present with him in the person of Titus a sample of his uncircumcised heathen converts. Some of the Judaizing representatives were in the conference—uninvited, it seems, which shows that no apostle or elder belonged to the Judaizers. The contention was severe, but Paul would

to consider of this matter. 7 And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them.

Brethren, ye know that [3]a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the [4]gospel, and believe. 8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; 9 and he made no distinction be-

[3]Gr. *from early days.* [4]Or, *good tidings*

---

not yield an inch, because he realized that here he was fighting the decisive battle for the genuine gospel.

At length, agreement was reached and the "right hand of fellowship (partnership) given."

(5) Full Discussion and Agreement. *Verses* 7–29.

a. When the general meeting was convened, opportunity was given for *open discussion* (7a), and the brethren used the opportunity freely. There was "much questioning." Meantime, the leaders waited. It is highly important in a democratic body that men be allowed freedom to express themselves. Only thus can right decisions be reached and supported when reached.

It is customary to say that James presided at the meeting, as he was the leading elder at Jerusalem (Gal. 1: 19). I suggest that as John took no part in the discussion and as he was an apostle, he was chairman of the meeting (cf. Gal. 2:9).

b. Peter's explanation (*verses* 7b–11) was next heard. He was the chief apostle, and quite inclined to Jewish scruples. Referring to his experience with Cornelius and his friends, Peter reminds the brethren ("you undersand," he says) that from early Christian days—long before the present crisis arose—God had chosen among the brethren that by Peter's mouth the Gentiles should "hear the word of the gospel and believe." God did it, and "the heart-knowing God" had borne witness to these Gentiles by "giving them" miraculous manifestations of "the Holy Spirit," exactly as to Jews. God made no sort of distinction for salvation be-

tween us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.

12 And all the multitude kept silence; and they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them.

---

tween Jews and Greeks, but "purified their hearts by means of faith," just as they were, without any legal ceremonialism.

Peter now boldly suggests that it would be tempting God to seek to impose on these men whom God has so emphatically accepted an additional burden, the "yoke" of the Law which no Jews who accepted it had ever been able to carry. It would be a form of sitting in judgment on God and putting him to the test as to whether his word and work could be accepted. It is highly important that Christians try their prejudices by God's course, rather than decide what God may be admitted to have done by the touchstone of their prejudices.

And now Peter reaches his climax. By the conversion of the heathen, Jewish Christians were getting clearer light on the manner of their own saving. They now could see that for all their Jewish religion, history, Law and ceremony, they were saved (not "shall be saved") by means of God's grace, "just the manner in which they (Gentiles), too," were saved.

c. Barnabas and Paul tell of God's approval (*verse* 12) of their course in receiving the Gentiles. For some time we have read Paul and Barnabas, but here in Jerusalem it is Barnabas who leads. They recounted (same word as in verse 3) "what signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles through them," in proof that God approved of their work.

d. James argues from Scripture and proposes the solution (*verses* 13–21). James very shrewdly appeared as

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying,

Brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the [4]Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 [5]After these things I will return,
And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen;
And I will build again the ruins thereof,
And I will set it up:
17 That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,
And all the [4]Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,
18 Saith the Lord, [6]who maketh these things known from of old.

[4]See marginal note on ch. 4. 25.
[5]Am. ix. 11, 12.
[6]Or, *who doeth these things* which were *known, etc.*

"answering" the question of Peter and the representations of the missionaries. He was, therefore, taking the role of speaking for the Jerusalem brethren, of whom he was the head elder. Calling for attention, he first directs it to the narrative of Peter, whom he designates by his old name, and in its ancient Hebrew form, Symeon. God had "turned his attention to taking out from the Gentile heathen a people for his name." See Isaiah 44: 1–5; 66: 19–21. This course on the part of God was supported by the words of the prophets, so that it was clearly to be accepted. James quotes Amos 9: 11f. He uses the Septuagint (Greek), and not the Hebrew version—they differ considerably at this passage—and seems to draw on Isaiah 45: 21 for part of the last line. The gist of the matter is that Jehovah will restore Israel after a period of punitive devastation; that the purpose of the restoration is an enlargement of the scope of God's revelation, so that "the residue of men," temporarily omitted in the period of Israel's election, "shall seek after Jehovah," and the full purpose is that all the Gentiles shall be included in the privilege, for God claims them all, calling his name upon them; and, finally, that this

19 Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them
that from among the Gentiles turn to God: 20 but that we
[7]write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of
idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and
from blood. 21 For Moses from generations of old hath
in every city them that preach him, being read in the syna-
gogues every sabbath.

[7]Or, *enjoin them*

---

is the Lord's (Jehovah's) declaration, who is now doing only that which was planned ("known") from old time.

Surely it is using this prophecy, and James, in a way he did not dream of, to seek to find in this passage a scheme of the order of events at the end of this age and into the millennium, holding that this is the age of "visiting" the nations "to take out" a people for the name of Jehovah while the masses are left to the doom of judgment. There is no foundation in Greek for the idea of "visiting;" "after these things" is from the standpoint of the prophet, and not after "the age of the calling out," and James is urging that in recent events they had the fulfillment of Amos and other prophets; "the residue of men" cannot legitimately be taken to mean those left after the gospel age; it is those left after the election of the Hebrews.

James was leading to the immediate conclusion which he now presents, possibly producing a written resolution as agreed upon in the private meeting. It was that the Jewish Christians should "not crowd in on" those who from heathenism were turning (significant present of a process begun and to continue) to (the) God, but that they enjoin on them that they "hold back" from certain practices common among heathen and especially offensive to followers of the Mosaic regulations, found in every city. So much the Gentile brethren could be asked to do in the interest of harmony and fellowship, and especially as all the things included were such as might easily lead to immoralities and corruption in belief and practice. (Cf. on these things, Romans 14: 21; 1 Cor. 8: 7–13; 10: 7, 8, 14–28.) If Gentile Christians should be flagrant in disregard of Jewish regulations,

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely,* Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 and they wrote *thus* by them, [8]The apostles and the elders, brethren, unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard that certain [9]who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment; 25 it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send

[8]Or, *The apostles and the elder brethren*
[9]Some ancient authorities omit *who went out.*

---

it would embitter unbelieving Jews all the more against Jewish Christians, and bring needless trouble upon them, and would hinder the progress of the gospel among Jews.

e. Solution unanimously adopted (*verses* 22–29). The wisdom of James was "from above" (cf. James 1: 5; 3: 17), and gained unanimous approval of "apostles," "elders," and "the whole church," who decided to send a deputation back with Paul and Barnabas. Two "chief men" among the official "brethren" were chosen; men already recognized as prophets (*verse* 32). These would not only bear a letter, but would confirm "the same things by word of mouth" (27).

The letter is a model of Christian courtesy and frankness (23ff). It is sent in the name of the official bodies, the "apostles and the elder brethren," and carries their "greeting" to the brethren from out of heathenism ("heathen," without the article) in Antioch and (the rest of) Syria and Cilicia. It recognized that the trouble had originated with some Christians who had gone out from their group and who caused distress, upsetting the brethren's souls (the figure of turning a vessel upside down). To these men the Jerusalem brethren had given no commandment (not "no such," as in Authorized Version). Thus they denied all responsibility for the troublesome teaching, and their course repudiates all idea of sympathy with it. They are with unanimous agreement sending their messengers with "our beloved Barnabas and Paul," claimed as their own and rec-

them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

30 So they, when they were dismissed, came down to Antioch; and having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle. 31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the [10]consolation. 32 And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, [1]exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. 33 And after they had spent

[10]Or, *exhortation* [1]Or, *comforted*

---

ognized as men who had "surrendered their lives in behalf of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Holy Spirit and they had found it good to place no burden upon their brethren beyond the necessary things now enumerated. To those in the original proposal they now add sexual sin. This may very well have been at the suggestion of the missionaries from their observation of the prevalence of this sin in the world of their day. The brethren would be pursuing good practices if they guarded themselves at these points (*verse* 29).

(6) Joint Deputation to Antioch. *Verses* 30–33.

It was a momentous meeting when the joint messengers arrived at Antioch and called all the multitude together to hear the outcome. The "epistle" was read, and produced great joy for "the comfort" it brought, for it had been inspired by the Comforter.

Judas and Silas exercised their prophetic gifts extensively ("by means of much speech"), "exhorted the brethren and made them firm" in their religion. After some time they returned, with peaceful farewell, unto them that sent them.

Inasmuch as we shortly afterward find Silas back in Antioch, it is not surprising that copyists got in an explanatory

some time *there*, they were dismissed in peace from the brethren unto those that had sent them forth.[2] 35 But Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and [3]preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And after some days Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they fare. 37 And Barnabas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pam-

[2]Some ancient authorities insert, with variations, ver. 34 *But it seemed good unto Silas to abide there.*
[3]Comp. marginal note on ch. 5. 42.

note, *verse* 34 of the Authorized Version, but it is clearly an interpolation, and so omitted in later versions.

4. Paul and Barnabas Disagree and Separate. *Verses* 35–39.

The missionaries were still ministers at Antioch and joined with many other workers for a time, teaching the disciples and evangelizing to make new disciples. These two functions are coupled all through the New Testament. It was no great while, however, until Paul's eager heart drew him toward his other disciples in Asia Minor. He proposed that they "return and look over the brethren, city by city," where they carried the Lord's message, to see "how they hold," in the expressive Greek idiom.

The "sharp contention" ("paroxysm") that arose over taking Mark along rather shocks us. To find such a quarrel between two foremost characters in "the gospel of the Holy Spirit" is surprising. We cannot help wondering why they did not pray and secure the Holy Spirit's guidance. We may at least learn that human nature is weak in the best, and that true devotion to a great cause does not guarantee infallibility of judgment nor imperturbability of temper. One of the most discouraging facts to those who know them, all the way along, is the quarrels among missionaries. The conditions are trying in extraordinary degree, and all are human.

phylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cyprus: 40 but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

It seems useless to try to decide which was right. Paul's reasoning was sound when he mistrusted a deserter. Barnabas' heart was right when he would encourage a penitent worker, and the outcome justified his heart. Paul came at length to find Mark a fellow worker, "useful to him for ministering" (Col. 4: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 11; Phile. 23).

They did not agree, and were "parted asunder." Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus. We come upon him no more in the New Testament story. Tradition tells that he went to Egypt, and some attribute to him the book of Hebrews. That the difference was not settled by the church nor even referred to it shows clearly that the church did not assume or exercise control of the missionaries.

5. Paul, with Silas and Others, Goes on a Second Missionary Journey (48–52 A.D.). 15: 40—18: 22.

Paul chose Silas as his new associate. His being a "prophet" may have been one reason. He seems also to have been a Roman citizen (16: 36f), which proved an advantage. They were "commended by the brethren to the grace of God." One hopes that the brethren were equally fraternal with Barnabas and Mark, but the record is silent.

(1) Visiting Churches Previously Founded. 15: 41—16: 5.

They went first through the provinces of Syria (north of Antioch) and Cilicia, "strengthening the churches." The Syrian churches were partly the product of Paul's Antiochan ministry, and so fell legitimately under his supervision. We know that it was a principle with him not to "build upon another man's foundation" (Romans 15: 20).

16 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewess that believed; but his father was a Greek. 2 The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Him would Paul have

---

The churches in Cilicia must then be accounted for as the product of his ministry during the period between his departure from Jerusalem (9: 30) and his return to Antioch with Barnabas (11: 25). See comment at 11: 25.

No details of their ministry in the various cities are given. At all the churches they left copies of the opinions ("*dogmata*") decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (here referred to as one group. Cf. 15: 23, where they are two groups.) These they were to guard in a double sense, to observe them and to keep them as a means of confuting any Judaizers who might seek to trouble them. The Galatian churches where this Judaizing propaganda was so powerful a little later were (almost certainly) these in Lycaonia and Pisidia and others in the same region. This agreement about their religion helped to strengthen the churches in their faith and encouraged such activity as resulted in daily increase in numbers (*verse* 5).

At Lystra (*verses* 1ff), Paul found Timothy, a young man destined to be his most beloved son and helper in the gospel. As he was in all probability a convert of Paul, he had been won on the first visit, when Paul was stoned here. Already he had become active in the work and had gained a good standing both in his own city and in Iconium. Paul "desired him to go with him." Paul was not afraid to call a young man into the ministry, even that of foreign missions. He understood that God speaks through men.

Timothy was the son of a Greek father, and although carefully trained in the Scriptures and Hebrew piety from infancy by mother and grandmother (see 2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 14f), had never been circumcised. To avoid all question of his own loyalty to Jewish customs and also to the Jerusalem agreement, Paul circumcised him, or procured his cir-

to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened [4]in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 And they went through [5]the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, be-

[4]Or, *in faith* [5]Or, *Phrygia and the region of Galatia*

---

cumcision. This act of Paul was probably made the basis later of a charge in this very region that he was inconsistent and not loyal to a simple faith religion. (See Gal. 2: 17f, for Paul's reply.)

(2) Led by the Spirit into Europe. 16: 6–10.

In "the Phrygian-Galatian country," Paul reached the limits of his former work. The populous province of Asia, with the great city of Ephesus and other important cities lay next ahead with a highway thither. To this Paul would go. But in some undefined way the Holy Spirit prevented their entering that province. They had no notion to go back, and so turned northward. Bithynia—across from the present Constantinople—was the next most important province, and the missionaries sought that. Again "the Spirit of Jesus" interposed and "did not allow them." Troas alone seemed left as a place of importance. It was rich in ancient legend, but not now of great importance, save as a port of entry for a limited area. We have to learn that reason must be used fully, but that the mind of the Spirit often has larger plans than our reason comprehends, and even his negative leading is to be accepted.

At this point the negative leading gives place to a positive call. In a night vision Paul saw a Macedonian who

seeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to [e]preach the gospel unto them.

11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; 12 and from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a *Roman* colony: and we were in this city tarrying certain days. 13 And on the sabbath day

[e]Gr. *bring the good tidings.* See ch. 5. 42.

---

had taken his stand, whether by Paul or across the Ægean on the shore of Macedonia is not clear, and was calling on him to go across and give help to the people of Macedonia.

This was the leading for which they were waiting, and at once they set about plans to go, rightly concluding that God had used the Macedonian figure to call them to this work.

Here for the first time Luke introduces himself into the narrative by use of "we." If Paul had been sorely ill recently (Gal. 4: 12ff), this may explain the presence of "the beloved physician."

(3) In the Roman City Philippi. *Verses* 11–40.

It was a great adventure, but, made in the certain leading of the Spirit of Jesus, it was a great enterprise. Already the gospel had gone to Rome, and so this is not the beginning of the evangelization of Europe, but is its authoritative and systematic undertaking. They made straight for the center of the section to which they were called. There was no halting for any work till Philippi, the first city of the section and enjoying the distinction and freedom of a Roman colony, with home rule government, therefore.

a. Lydia and Her Household at "a Place of Prayer" (verses 11–15).

Finding no synagogue in this city, a place for beginning seems not at once to have appeared. Still, while "tarrying certain days" they were looking out for an opening, and

we went forth without the gate by a river side, [1]where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

[1]Many authorities read *where was wont to be etc.*

---

supposed they had located a "prayer-place" outside the city on a river side. Expecting to find there some few Jews they went on the sabbath day. They found only women, but knew the Lord well enough not to despise them, but talked to them (familiarly) and yet, with the courtesy of Jewish custom in formal address, seated as they talked. A true minister led by the Spirit delivers his message to the audience God brings to him, even if it would seem, humanly speaking, disappointing.

The first result was a convert who had come from that very "Asia" from which the Lord's Spirit had shut the missionaries off (*verse* 6). She was a merchant dealing in purple goods which she would import from the East. She was already a worshiper of the true God, and the Lord, present on the occasion, opened Lydia's heart so that she attended to the things Paul spoke with comprehending and accepting faith. She and her household were received into Christian fellowship at once and baptized and the missionaries were forced by her insistence to make her home theirs while they remained in Philippi.

Then, as now, the strong, religious head of a family had much influence with the household. Lydia's "house" may very well have included only servants, but children are by no means to be denied. Of the many examples of households who became Christians, referred to in the New Testament, here alone are we not told, directly or indirectly, of the faith of all the members of the family, and it is of

16 And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having [8]a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. 17 The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are [9]servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the [10]way of salvation. 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.

[8]Gr. *a spirit, a Python.* [9]Gr. *bondservants.* [10]Or, *a way*

course to be assumed here, whether the household include children or grown people. See 10: 2 for the house of Cornelius; 16: 34 for the jailor's; 18: 18, Crispus; 1 Cor. 1: 2, 16, Stephanas; John 4: 53, the nobleman of Cana; John 11: 5, etc., Lazarus.

b. Conflict with the Spirit of Evil in a Demoniac Girl (verses 16–18).

The missionaries seem to have made the prayer-place their place of worship or of preaching. On the way to this place they met a girl with a spirit, "a python" it is further called, which shows that in the conception of the day it was connected with the Pythian oracle, so named originally from the slaying at the cave of a python. From this cave came prophetic messages, according to heathen belief. It is now thought that its prophetesses spoke in ventriloquism, and so in the case of this girl.

In the case of Jesus we know the demoniacs had peculiar insight for recognizing his divine personality. So this unfortunate girl would follow the missionaries, shouting that these men were slaves of God Most High, and that they were teaching the way of salvation. All of us have witnessed examples of uncanny insight in demented persons.

Like Jesus, Paul objected to the witness of the demon, and when she had repeated it for many days, until it "became burdensome," he commanded the spirit in the name of Jesus to go out. This action, although one of mercy to the poor victim, brought Paul into a serious situation.

19 But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain
was [1]gone, they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and dragged
them into the marketplace before the rulers, 20 and when
they had brought them unto the [2]magistrates, they said,
These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21
and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to
receive, or to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude
rose up together against them: and the [2]magistrates rent
their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with
rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them,

[1]Gr. *come out.* [2]Gr. *praetors:* comp. ver. 22, 35, 36, 38

c. Conflict with the Spirit of Commerce (*verses* 19–24).

This is even more bitter and obstinate in opposing the work of the gospel than is the spirit of evil.

This girl was "owned" by a company of gentlemen who exploited her fortune-telling gift to great financial advantage. When the demon "went out" of the girl they saw that their hope of gain by her "went out" (the same form exactly is used of the two). How often is the hope of gain bound up inseparably with a spirit of the evil one! The men with the anger of revenge and hate dragged Paul and Silas before the city rulers—"Archons," exactly the right word for this city. Once before the officers, they went right to the supreme "*duumviri*," or "magistrates."

The charge made no mention of the actual grievance, which would probably have gained no standing in court. Rather they charged preaching an illegal religion. Rome tolerated all existing religions, prohibiting new ones, and closely restricted proselytizing, especially of Roman citizens. These preachers might be over-zealous Jews or they might be charged with preaching an unauthorized religion. The market mob joined in the charge and the officers readily yielded. They tore off the garments of Paul and Silas (not their own, I think) and commanded that the "lictors" beat them cruelly with rods (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 25). Then they were rushed off to prison, all bleeding, and, as dangerous and especially bad prisoners, were put in stocks in the partly underground prison, "the guard-of-the-prison," thus providing to keep them "safely."

they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. 25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prisonhouse were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 And he called for lights and sprang in, and trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Be-

---

d. Prison Testimony Wins the Jailor and His Family (verses 25–34).

The missionaries were in no condition to sleep, but no suffering could prevent praise, and the prisoners were listening to this new thing in their experience. God was listening, too, and responded. An earthquake that shook the very foundation of the prison was his voice. Even the doors were unbolted and the bonds of the prisoners unfastened, so that they all were free. There was intelligent use of the earthquake.

The jailor, suddenly awakened and aware that the prison was open, not yet aware of the cause of the confusion, but knowing that he was answerable with his life for his prisoners, impulsively drew his sword and thought to escape disgrace by suicide. Whether Paul saw him from within the dark cell or heard his movement or knew by the Spirit of God the situation matters not. He saved the man's life by a loud call and assured him none had taken advantage of the opportunity for escape.

The man seems to have known already that these men preached salvation. Eagerly he rushed in with his light and fell at their feet. Then he brought them out and earnestly inquired what he needed to do to be saved. He may

lieve on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. 32 And they spake the word of [3]the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. 34 And he brought them up into his house, and set [4]food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, [5]having believed in God.

35 But when it was day, the [6]magistrates sent the [7]serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the jailor reported the word to Paul, *saying*, The [6]magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore come forth, and go in peace.

[3]Some ancient authorities read *God.*
[4]Gr. *a table.*
[5]Or, *having believed God*
[6]Gr. *praetors.* See ver. 20.
[7]Gr. *lictors.*

---

thus far have understood little of what it was to be saved, but he had a conscience and in the presence of good men and God he stood condemned. Paul and Silas told him how faith "that laid hold on the Lord Jesus" would save him, and his house as well. This suggestion about "his house" brought the opportunity of preaching to them all. Their faith took on practical expression. The much-needed bath was provided for the apostles even before the new converts were baptized, which followed, however, immediately. Next, a needed supper at the jailor's table, while "the-whole-house" joined with him in the praiseful joy on account of the new faith in God. The Greek participle here emphasizes the completeness of the faith which had laid hold on God.

e. Release (verses 35–40).

Their release came early the next day. The head officers realized, no doubt, that they had been influenced by the energy of the vengeful exploiters of the unfortunate girl and by the violence of the mob rather than by justice, and they were quite open to the influence of the earthquake. They sent the "lictors" (again the exact official term), commanding the jailor to release "these men." But they were not so easily to slip out of a legally awkward situation. It was worse than they had at all realized. Paul was quick to see his advantage when he was offered freedom to "go in peace,"

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us publicly,
uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into
prison; and do they now cast us out privily? nay verily;
but let them come themselves and bring us out. 38 And the
[8]serjeants reported these words unto the [9]magistrates: and
they feared when they heard that they were Romans; 39 and
they came and besought them; and when they had brought
them out, they asked them to go away from the city. 40 And
they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house*
of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they [10]com-
forted them, and departed.

[8]Gr. *lictors.* [9]Gr. *Praetors.* See ver. 20. [10]Or, *exhorted*

without a trial on the charges preferred. Their Roman citizenship could be used to give their cause worthy standing in the city. Paul refused to be slipped out by a back-door, so to say. His reply articulates his just grounds of complaint. Men possessing the high privilege of Roman citizenship had been insulted by a public beating, an offense in any event but aggravated by the fact that they were uncondemned, and then had been thrown into prison. "And now secretly are they casting us out? Not at all! Rather let them come in person and conduct us out."

This speech, reported back by the lictors, went home with full force. The *duum viri* came and "besought them," led them out as Paul demanded, and requested them to leave the city. It would on all accounts be embarrassing for the officials for them to remain.

The apostles went home to Lydia's house where "the brethren" met them. After exhorting the church they departed, apparently leaving Luke behind, since he does not use "we" in the next sections. He would direct the life of the new church and its organization. It proved Paul's most gratifying church, liberal, loyal, progressive and free from any serious heresies. At least four times they sent him money, one occasion calling out the wonderful epistle to them, in which Paul says they had supported his work financially "from the first day until now" (Phil. 1: 5), on

17 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three [1]sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, 3 opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, *said he*, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. 4 And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the

[1]Or, *weeks*

---

account of which he recognizes them as his "partners in the extension, defense and establishment of the gospel" (Phil. 1: 5, 8).

(4) Through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica. 17: 1–9.

We need not speculate why they passed less important towns. The missionaries made their first stop at the next capital city, Thessalonica, the now noted **Saloniki.** A synagogue of Jews opened up the usual method to them, and for three weeks Paul was permitted to use this as his teaching place. He patiently reasoned from the Old Testament Scriptures, expounding them so as to show in detail that their ideal for the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus.

The success was notable. Some Jews yielded to the persuasion and "cast-in-their-lot" with the missionaries, while of Greeks who were already in their limited knowledge devout toward God "a great multitude" were won and "not a few" women of the best social standing. In very many places God had thus used the Jews to prepare eager souls ready to pass over from the promise of Judaism to the fullness of the gospel.

Here as elsewhere the Jewish leaders were stirred by jealousy when they saw their influential Gentile sympathizers, whom they had yet been unable to bring fully to Judaism, so easily won by the gospel preachers. They took

city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned [2]the world upside down are come hither also; 7 whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. 8 And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berœa: who when they were come thither

[2]Gr. *the inhabited earth.*

---

along certain toughs from the market-place-hangers-on, and thus having gotten up "a mob" "they terrified the city" and "besetting the house of Jason," the host of the preachers, sought to bring them out to the populace.

Paul and Silas were securely hidden, or else were not with "the brethren." The mob took Jason and other believers before the magistrates, here with exactness called by Luke **"politarchs."** The charge was a somewhat exaggerated compliment: "The ones who had turned the inhabited earth upside down, these were now present in Thessalonica and Jason had taken them under his patronage." And they charged that the entire group was guilty of treasonable conduct in claiming another than Cæsar to be king, namely, Jesus. Little would these Jews have cared, if this were all.

The multitude and the politarchs doubtless knew far less than the Jews, of Jesus and his followers. They were troubled, but recognized how little ground appeared for any action. They put Jason and the other Christians under bond of good behavior and let them go.

(5) In Berœa, Where "Many Believed." Verses 10–14.

That the missionaries fled from persecutions was never due to lack of courage; as a rule they could better promote the gospel in freedom than in prison. When the interest of the gospel called for imprisonment and death they were

went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed of Paul at Berœa also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to go as far as to the sea: and Silas and Timothy abode there still. 15 But

---

ready. Usually prudent flight found new opportunities. They left a series of churches in their wake.

In Berœa they went to work at once in the synagogue. The Jews were always given their chance. Here they exhibited a notable openness which receives praise of the Spirit in the record. They received the word of the missionaries "with favorable inclinations" and each day applied to their teachings the test of Scripture to see "whether it had these things that way." With a keen sense of the logic of the outcome, Luke reports that "many of them therefore (naturally) believed," and, as he is always glad to be able to add, the believers included also Greeks "not a few" men and women of noble standing.

Thus affairs were proceeding most satisfactorily until Thessalonican Jews learned of it. They came "there too," with the same spirit shown at Thessalonica, and began stirring up and annoying the multitudes. Their hatred was especially against Paul. Hence, leaving both Silas and Timothy further to promote the work in Thessalonica, Paul was sent away by "the brethren" with attendants to go "as far as the sea." Timothy has not been mentioned since 16: 1, and we can only conjecture what part he has played until now. He may have been on errands for Paul. We find him so occupied after this.

(6) In the Capital of the World's Culture. *Verses* 15–34.

Paul's Berœan friends did not leave him until they were able to "set him down" safely in Athens, which under favor-

they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with them that met him. 18 And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this babbler say? others, He seemeth to be a setter

---

able conditions would have required four days. He seems to have wrought out some definite plans on the journey for he sent back word ("command") for Silas and Timothy to "come to him with all speed." Or (see 1 Thess. 2–3) Paul may have been in a state of physical and psychic depression that called for attendance.

Meantime he is left alone in the city which for half a millennium had been building a reputation for art and culture and had long been the world's great center for these. But while the form of philosophy and the pride of culture remained the spirit had gone out of the body. No name comes to us of an artist in any line from this first century. Luke tells us (*verse* 21) how all the Athenians "found time for" nothing else than "telling something or hearing something newer." And this spirit affected likewise "sojourning guests" in the city. The pride of a rather superficial philosophy is reflected well in the supercilious attitude of the Epicureans and stoics who "encountered" Paul. The Epicureans were much like modern "pragmatists." They believed in God, or gods, but removed them far away from the practical life of men, emphasized the idea of process, or evolution, as we say now, and regarded "truth" as that which satisfies. Men should make the most of life while in it. Stoics were rather pantheistic in their thought of God, fatalistic in philosophy, austere and rigid in their ideas of ethics and practical living.

They called Paul "a babbler," or better, "a dabbler"—the word is that for a bird that feeds by picking seeds out

forth of [3]strange [4]gods: because he [5]preached Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took hold of him, and brought him [6]unto [7]the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there [8]spent their time

[3]Or, *foreign divinities*
[4]Gr. *demons.*
[5]See marginal note on ch. 5. 42.
[6]Or, *before*
[7]Or, *the hill of Mars*
[8]Or, *had leisure for nothing else*

of street refuse—and they wondered what he "would say" if he could get ideas enough together to make out an intelligent statement of his views.

Some recognized at least that he was a religious teacher, but his "gods" ("demons" in Greek, or "minor gods") seemed to them "strange." They had evidently paid little attention thus far to Paul's words. They heard of Jesus, a masculine noun, and of the resurrection, which in Greek is a feminine noun (*anastasis*), and they superficially thought, or affected to, that these were names for a god and a goddess.

Paul's first work in Athens, as always, was among Jews and devout (believing) Gentiles in the synagogue. But he could not leave the idolatrous Greeks out of account from the first, for the city was "full of idols" which "provoked his spirit" while he was (a) *waiting and observing* (*verses 15f*). There were idols on the streets and on the buildings, in temples and in homes. There was a saying that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. That the true idea of God and worship should be so degraded in the very city where men were most advanced in culture oppressed the soul of the missionary. And so he (b) *reasoned with all classes* (*verse 17*) daily, dealing with such as "happened along," in the market place, and would stop to listen. Such had been the way of Socrates long before, and he was slain for teaching a new religion.

Now, when (c) *the philosophers take notice of the missionary* (*verses 18–21*) they take him to the Areopagus. Some understand that Paul was under arrest and required

in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)
22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said,
Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are
[b]very religious. 23 For as I passed along, and observed the
objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this
inscription, To an Unknown God. What therefore ye wor-
ship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you. 24 The God
that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord

[b]Or, *somewhat superstitious*

---

before the court to give account—in the city—of his teaching. Most understand, however, that there was no legal proceeding but that on the "Hill of Areos (Mars)." Paul was, with more or less of courtesy, asked to explain. This gave opportunity for his (d) *wonderful discourse to a learned audience* (*verses 22–31*).

He shows his skill and ability, his courtesy and faithfulness in this address. His form of address, "Gentlemen Athenians," is just that of the polite orator. His word describing them may mean religious or superstitious. Paul recognized that in all respects they were more than usual given to fear of divinities. As evidence, he cites an altar inscribed to "(the) Unknown God," which he had seen as he had gone through the city examining the objects of their pious devotion. In this way Paul disclosed his accurate observation and interest. He also found a point of contact with his audience and a point of departure for his new teaching. A new religion could not legally be introduced but he could expound the nature of this "Unknown God" whom they were already worshiping without knowing him. How many of his auditors had ever taken notice of this altar or what it meant to those who did recognize it made no real difference for Paul's use. He could with entire propriety use this to preach the true God and his revelation in Jesus. Every missionary ought to study Paul's method here and the principles in religion which he here sets forth.

Paul interprets the unknown God as "the one that produced the cosmic order and all the things (in detail) in it." This God, having under control, as their Lord, heaven and

of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in [10]temples made with hands; 25 neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said,

For we are also his offspring.

[10]Or, *sanctuaries*

---

earth does not dwell in hand-made temples nor does he receive supporting service at human hands ministering to one in need of something. On the other hand, it is he who gives constantly to all their life force, their breath and all the things they have. Greek polytheisms, like all others, had separate gods for various functions in relation to men. Paul sweeps away all need or place for these with one stroke in declaring that the true God, unknown heretofore, fulfills every function of God in relation to men. He appeals to the basal religious emotion and offers with a true theology to satisfy all man's needs.

This all-creating and all-sustaining God has a gracious purpose in his control of all men. He made of (out of) one common stock every nation (racial section) of men. He placed each group at its place geographically and in its time historically on the earth in accordance with a plan. This plan looked to their all seeking God, if, to be sure, they might feel after and find him by the processes of religious reason studying the revelations of nature. And, indeed, God is not very far from every human being, so that but for some hindrance of depravity they could all find him. For in him we live and move and exist. We are wholly sustained by him. Here Paul appeals, by a general reference to certain of the Greeks' own poets, to the effect that we are God's offspring. The exact words are from Aratos of Cilicia, and the thought is found in other writers also.

29 Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think
the [1]the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone,
graven by art and device of man. 30 The times of ignorance
therefore God overlooked; but now he [2]commandeth men that
they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he hath
appointed a day in which he will judge [3]the world in righte-

[1]Or, *that which is divine*
[2]Some ancient authorities read *declareth to men.*
[3]Gr. *the inhabited earth.*

Paul here asserts God's concern for, support of, control over, and gracious purpose toward every group of the human race. In Ephesians he argues for a universal gospel, and predicts the completion of God's plan for constructing a new humanity out of the fragments into which sin and ignorance has broken up that which originally and ideally he made "of one."

From our relation to God, in nature and dependence, Paul argues against the worship of God in material forms which men construct. Thus he has repudiated both their temples (*verse* 24) and their idols (*verse* 29). God has acted in past ages as if he did not see that men were perverting their religious ideas and emotions and dishonoring him. Thus he has allowed men to go on living and degrading the idea of God when in his purity and power he might have been expected to destroy them. He no longer means that men shall worship ignorantly, but announces to men, through the gospel witnesses, that they shall all, everywhere, change their ideas and ways. This announcement he bases on, and enforces by, the fact that he has set a day on which he is about to judge the inhabited earth (all the inhabitants of the earth) in righteousness. The standard is to be a man whom God designated, giving sufficient ground to all for believing in this one as Judge by raising him from the dead.

Thus Paul has led up to the great central facts of the gospel. If allowed to explain the resurrection, he would easily have shown its connection with sin and atonement. There is no ground for the disposition of many to find fault with this address of Paul. Surely Paul does not mean, in

ousness [4]by [5]the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again. 33 Thus Paul went out from among them. 34 But certain men clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

[4]Gr. *in.* [5]Or, *a man*

---

1 Corinthians 2: 1ff, to confess to error and failure in Athens as the ground for his (truer) course in Corinth. At Athens, knowing his audience, he sought in the most skillful way possible to get them to hear his gospel. Only by the course he followed could he have got so far as he did.

(*e*) *The Outcome was Disappointing but Not Fruitless* (*verses* 32–34).

The Athenians had no ear for the teaching of "the resurrection of dead bodies." Some openly jeered. Others put Paul off more politely with the promise to hear him yet again on this subject. But all had enough and would listen no longer. Thus it was that Paul must go out from their midst. Yet Luke is able to say that some men ("gentlemen") "stuck to him" and exercised faith. Among these was one judge of the court (Areopagite) and a lady, Damaris, and others of less distinction along with these. The day was not lost.

(7) In Corinth, a Center of the World's Sin. 18. 1–17.

Fifty miles from Athens lay Corinth, destroyed by the Romans in their conquest of Greece two centuries before Paul's time, but rebuilt on a splendid scale, and now when Paul came one of the great commercial cities of the world. Full of all the vices of a rich commercial city, it had also sanctified iniquity, and social sin was rampant. It is said that a thousand "consecrated prostitutes" were connected

18 After these things he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them; 3 and because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and [c]persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the

[c]Gr. *sought to persuade.*

---

with temple worship. Hither came Paul with his gospel, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

a. A varied and successful ministry, with the special presence and approval of God (*verses* 1–11). He had studied his method with full knowledge of the characteristics of the city and determined upon a clear, plain preaching of the gospel of the cross (1 Cor. 2). He was prepared for criticism which came in abundance (2 Cor. 10–13).

He found readily some good and helpful friends, Aquila and Priscilla, Jews native to Pontus, Asia Minor, recently driven out of Italy by a decree of Claudius. The meager information about this, through Suetonius, indicates that the expulsion was on account of conflicts between Jews and Christians, but the matter is not quite clear. It is not said that this generous man and his remarkably strong wife were already Christians, but so it seems. At any rate, they took Paul in, and since all were tentmakers, and Paul was now under necessity for making a living, because he would not be a dependent, an arrangement was made for Paul to live with Aquila, and they conducted business together. On sabbaths Paul persuaded Jews and Greeks concerning salvation through the Lord.

At length, Paul's helpers, both Silas and Timothy, came down from Macedonia. They brought good cheer concerning the saints there (1 Thess. 2), and they brought money for Paul's support (2 Cor. 11: 9; Phil. 4: 15), so that it was

Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6 And when they opposed themselves and [7]blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. 7 And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, [8]believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace:

[7]Or, *railed* [8]Gr. *believed the Lord.*

---

now possible for him to leave off secular labor and be "constrained by the word," *i. e.*, devote himself wholly to it. He "gave thorough testimony" to the Jews that the Messiah was to be found identified in Jesus.

Paul's more continuous and energetic testimony was met by aggressive and organized opposition of the Jewish body. They especially blasphemed, by which is probably meant spoke violently against Jesus. Paul symbolically rejects the Jews and solemnly charges them with responsibility for their being turned over to death. He is pure, free from their blood. He has given them ample opportunity. From now on—his course is irrevocable—he proceeds to the Gentiles. He set up his Gentile work right near the synagogue in the house of a God-fearing Gentile, Titus Justus. This may have been the only place open to him, or it may have seemed wise to locate thus near so as to attract those seeking religious teaching. We may be sure it was not done in spitefulness.

The Jewish mission had not been a failure, for among others the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, and his entire household came to the Lord by faith and joined in with the "many Corinthians" (heathen) now believing and accepting baptism—the tenses are of continuously repeated action.

The Lord now comes to Paul with a vision of encouragement (*verses* 9–10). From Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, written here, and to the Corinthians written some three

10 for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city. 11 And he dwelt *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him be-

---

years later, we can see how greatly Paul would be helped just now by this special assurance from his Master. The first word is that so often given to God's representatives from Moses and Joshua on, "Do not be afraid," and the reason is that supreme one, "I am with thee." Hence, Paul is to "continue speaking and not become silent at all." Nobody shall set upon him for hurting him. The reason for the bold effort is that "God has in this city a people that is numerous," and Paul is sent to gather them out and to set them over into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. God's election and plan is the Christian worker's call to service and assurance of success. The word, a "people," here is that uniformly applied to the Jews as God's own people, and so here applies to his new Israel (cf. 1 Peter 2: 9).

Paul now felt a sense of relief and definiteness of work and "settled down for a year and six months in teaching among them the word of God." Teaching was always an essential part of the work of missions and evangelism. How greatly it was needed in Corinth the epistles show. Not only was a very numerous church built up in Corinth, but the city was a center from which to sound the word throughout all Achaia (1 Thess. 1: 7f), and we know of a church at Cenchrea (Romans 16: 1), the port of Corinth.

b. Jews Undertake Persecution Before Gallio (*verses* 12–17).

Gallio was a man of distinguished family, brother of the great Seneca, and noted for his polish and kindly disposition. When he was proconsul the Jews decided that he could be used to assist them in suppressing Paul. They organized a movement quietly, and with a unanimous and sudden up-

fore the judgment-seat, 13 saying, This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of wicked villany, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: 15 but if they are questions about words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; I am not minded to be a judge of these matters. 16 And he drove them from the judgment-seat. 17 And they all laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things.

---

rising laid hold on Paul and brought him before Gallio. They framed a charge that is rather ambiguous. Rome allowed the Jews to manage their own religious affairs, but Paul, by setting up the church independently, was not subject to their jurisdiction. He could be charged with violating Roman law in persuading men (proselytizing) to worship the divinity in a new way. This their words may mean. Gallio soon discovered that it was a charge against a Jew teaching worship of the God of the Jews in a new way. He would have nothing to do with the case. Paul thus failed of an opportunity to preach to a Roman proconsul as he was about to do when Gallio firmly shut off the whole proceeding. A case of legal injustice or of moral viciousness he would take up from them on a rational basis. "Since it is inquiries about a word (Messiah, probably) and names and a law that belongs to you Jews, look to it yourselves," said Gallio; "I (emphatic) do not wish to be judge of these things." And he had the court room cleared by driving them off.

The Jews had ignominously failed, and the crowd, always ready for an opportunity to heap contempt on the Jews, laid hold on Sosthenes, the new ruler of the synagogue since Crispus became a Christian, and gave him a good beating (imperfect tense of description) right before the judgment seat. Gallio refused to concern himself with any aspect of the affair. He had no interest in the religious questions and no concern for the Jews who had rather insulted him,

18 And Paul, having tarried after this yet many days took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila: having shorn his head in Cenchreæ; for he had a vow. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. 20 And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; 21 but taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you if God will, he set sail from Ephesus.

22 And when he had landed at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the church, and went down to Antioch. 23 And

---

or certainly annoyed him, by assuming that they could use him.

If this Sosthenes is the one named in 1 Corinthians 1: 1, he, too, was later won to Christ, but we cannot know.

While Paul was thus "set upon" it was by no means "to his hurt," but to the discomfiture of his enemies (*verse* 10).

(8) On His Way to Antioch Paul Starts a Work at Ephesus. *Verses* 18–22.

The further stay in Corinth is indefinitely stated, but it was without any reference to Jewish opposition that at length he "gave an orderly farewell" to the brethren and sailed for Syria. With him went his good friends, Aquila and Priscilla, as far as Ephesus, where he left them, but not until he had himself reasoned with the Jews in their synagogue. That Paul had his hair cut short (*verse* 18), under a Jewish vow would commend him to the Jews, and at first he usually found favor with them. They requested him to remain longer with them but, possibly to discharge his vow at Jerusalem, he was unwilling to delay, but promised to return to them, "God willing," and so sailed to Cæsarea. The beginning he made was followed up by Aquila and Priscilla so that when Paul returns he will find a good work awaiting him.

Of Paul's visit to Jerusalem at this time we know only that he "saluted the church." The expositors are well agreed that *verse* 22 means that he did go to Jerusalem. "Went up"

having spent some time *there*, he departed, and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples.

24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, [9]an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. 25 This man had been [10]instructed in the

[9]Or, *a learned man* [10]Gr. *taught by word of mouth.*

---

could easily mean "landed" from the ship, and his salutation may have been of the church at Cæsarea. If so, and if he went at once to Antioch, it would agree with the purpose as expressed in *verse* 18. The "some time" spent at Antioch can hardly have been more than a few weeks, or months, at most.

6. A Third Tour Over Most of the Territory of the Other Two. 18: 23—21: 16.

The call of his churches and of the unevangelized would not suffer the great apostle long to linger at Antioch. Even there he would be busy with letters and plans. Soon he was on the road again.

(1) Again in Galatia—Phrygia. 18: 23.

First of all he goes over the territory of the first two journeys, taking the cities in order, and "making firm" all the disciples. True Christians are always learners, and Paul was the great teacher of these. The Galatian letter shows how they needed it. That letter is commonly supposed to have been written at Corinth several years after this, but the opinion is now gaining that it was written earlier and at least before this third personal visit. I think so.

(2) Apollos Comes into the Christian Ministry. *Verses* 24–28.

This item is inserted here by Luke because it belongs here in time and because it is important for a better understanding of the later story. Apollos was a Jew, native of Alexandria. He was a man of eloquence, evidently trained in the Jewish Alexandrine philosophy and in

way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: 26 and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he [1]helped them much that had believed through grace; 28 for

[1]Or, *helped much through grace them that had believed*

---

rhetoric. Best of all, he was "mighty in the Scriptures." He knew the Old Testament and knew how to interpret it effectively. He had "had oral instruction" in the way of the Lord. He came to Ephesus and at once went zealously to work talking of Jesus and teaching accurately the things pertaining to him, for he was a man of zealous spirit. But his knowledge of the gospel was not complete. He knew only the baptism of John, by which Luke probably means that he was ignorant of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and so of the plan of the Commission and of the organization and life of the kingdom of God as it was being realized under the apostles. His theology and his gospel were good, but not complete.

He went to the synagogue and began boldly to teach what he knew. Here Priscilla and Aquila—named in this order four of the six times they are mentioned—heard him. Their association with Paul enabled them at once to detect the limitations of Apollos. They could see also his sincerity and his value. They did not denounce or despise him, but took him cordially to themselves and "more accurately set out for him the way of God." The behavior of Apollos and of his teachers is ideal and should be carefully studied and imitated. When Apollos wanted to go across to Corinth, the Ephesian "brethren" encouraged him and wrote a letter commending him to the Corinthian saints, the first such letter of which we find account.

He proved very useful at Corinth, his grace from God being just such as the believers there needed at this time.

he powerfully confuted the Jews, [2]*and that* publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

[2]Or, *showing publicly*

The Jews were evidently troubling them after Paul's departure and Apollos was able eloquently to show their error before the populace and to prove by use of the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah promised to the Jews and to the world. The mention of "the grace" of Apollos in *verse* 27 suggests that he had now received the Holy Spirit in a specific way.

Apollos was opportunely brought into the service of the gospel and he should be studied in 19: 1; 1 Cor. 1: 12; 3: 5, 6, 22; 4: 6; 16: 12, 19; Titus 3: 13.

(3) A Great Ministry at Ephesus. 19: 1—20: 1.

After Apollos had gone to Corinth, Paul arrived at Ephesus, having entered the province of Asia from Phrygia and gone through its mountainous highlands. Here he is to have his longest ministry in one center, two and a half years. It was a city of first rate importance as a political center, a commercial metropolis, a religious capital with its temple to Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the world. Here Paul was to gather a great church, to suffer much bitter opposition from many adversaries and experience sorrow in concern for souls, even to fight (at least figuratively) with wild beasts. From this center by means of converts and helpers all the province of Asia heard the word and "the seven churches of Asia" had their founding. While making this his headquarters he will make a short visit to Corinth and write them at least one letter, possibly several.

a. Some Men Deficient in Baptism (*verses* 1–7).

Soon after reaching Ephesus, Paul found "about twelve" disciples whose speech or conduct indicated lack of understanding of the nature or meaning of the faith. They had

19 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples: 2 and he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they *said* unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether [2]the Holy Spirit was *given*. And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. 4 And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is,

[2]Or, *there is a Holy Spirit*

possibly come from Egypt or elsewhere, like Apollos whom they resemble in their ideas.

Paul asks whether they received the Holy Spirit at the time of putting faith in Jesus. We have seen how first believers in each new geographical or racial section have their faith and acceptance approved by the Holy Spirit in miracle-working gifts. Paul applies this test. It turned out that they had not, at the time of their baptism, so much as heard that the Holy Spirit was present and working in believers. They can hardly mean that they did not know of his existence. John 7: 39 throws light on this passage. Paul seems astonished, and asks "into what then were they baptized?" They reply "into the baptism of John," which suggests, certainly, that they may have been won first of all by some of John's followers before the death and resurrection of Jesus were known where they lived. Paul explains John's baptism and its relation to Jesus. Hereupon they were baptized into the name of (into a definitely apprehended relation to) the Lord Jesus. Their former immersion was with such limited understanding and intent that Paul was not able to recognize it as Christian baptism, and so baptism—not re-baptism—was now administered. The fault was in the intent, in the symbolism. This was so defective that it was no baptism. It is not well to speak of re-baptism. There is but "one baptism." An immersion is either baptism or it is not. In any questioned case let that matter be decided and the course of action determined accordingly.

on Jesus. 5 And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And they were in all about twelve men.

8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for the space of two years; so

---

After their baptism and when Paul had laid his hands upon them the Holy Spirit came upon them, manifesting himself in speaking in tongues and prophesying, his normal gifts on such occasions (chapters 2, 10).

b. Three Months' Ministry in a Synagogue (*verse* 8).

The Jews were here more friendly and endured Paul longer than at any other place. The record is very summary. This three months was but a small fraction of the whole Ephesian campaign. Its results are not separately stated. Paul reasoned with his powerful logic and knowledge of the Scriptures, and persuaded with his enthusiastic sympathy. By no means all, but only "some" of the Jews "were hardened and were disobedient' to God's call. But these were active and hindered the work by speaking evil of the Way of the life in Christ Jesus in the open meetings before the multitude. Paul did not denounce them nor pronounce judgment, as at Corinth, for example, for the majority were still open to effort. But for freedom and the better development of his work he withdrew from them and "set his disciples off" as a distinct group no longer in any way connected with the synagogue.

c. Two Years' Ministry in a Schoolhouse (*verses* 9, 10).

The new plan located the Christian work "in the school of Tyrannus." How Paul and the church procured its use we need not speculate about. They held daily meetings for

that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. 11 And God wrought special [1]miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out. 13 But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them that had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by

[1]Gr. *powers.*

---

two years. We shall see later that Paul found time for some manual labor and for much personal visitation along with his public "reasoning."

The outcome is summed up in a single brief clause: "All the inhabitants of Asia (the province) heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (see at beginning of chapter).

d. Notable Miracles (*verses* 11, 12).

All along God has set his seal to Paul's work by miracles and has given him this means of medical missions in his work. Here this reaches its climax. "Powers and not the usually met ones," Luke says, "God wrought through Paul's hands." As in the case of Peter (5: 15) the faith of the needy was helped by physical contact or symbols. We cannot overlook that in the case of both apostles Luke gives but one sentence (verse) to these extraordinary powers, nor that in both cases they were used for beneficient helpfulness in an age when medical healing was little developed.

e. Sooth-Sayers and a Bonfire (*verses* 13–20).

The extraordinary power in Paul was the occasion for trouble, and for ultimately larger success as well. Belief in demon possession was very extensive, so that professional exorcists could win fame and money by seeming to expel demons from people with nervous affections, just as similar religious quacks succeed today. Some itinerant Jews of this class were now in Ephesus and had the wit to see that Paul's power was really effective, and undertook to use it

Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I [5]know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. 19 And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight

[5]Or, *recognize*

---

themselves, solemnly charging spirits of evil to come out "on the name of the Lord Jesus." But they had no personal claim on Jesus, no experience of him, and so their formula was, "by the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Second-hand grace is of little value.

It was quite in accord with a sacred feeling of current superstition about the number seven that Sceva's sons were exorcists, and their father being a chief priest was an asset; and they undertook this trick of using the names of Jesus and Paul. But the evil spirit was too keen for them. He said, "Jesus I recognize, and Paul I understand (the two words for know are thus best rendered); but you, who are you?" There were two of the seven present on this occasion. Upon them the demonized man sprang in a sudden frenzy, and when they rushed out of the house they were much the worse for the encounter.

The affair soon got to be known in all circles in the whole city, with the result of great awe, and honor for the name of Jesus. Many who had become believers but whose practices were untrue to their faith came forward in confession of their wrong-doings. Also a considerable number of the practicers of magic of various sorts came bringing the books which gave the tricks of magic, and destroyed them in a public bonfire. Whether all these were Christians we are not told. The wide prevalence of this "black art" is indi-

of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.

21 Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a

---

cated by the value of the books destroyed; from eight to ten thousand dollars.

Thus the Word increased and became powerful in its effect because of ("in accordance with") the might of the Lord—taking the words 'of the Lord" with *might* and not with *word,* as in the translation. It can be taken either way, but the position suggests the way we have read it.

f. Plans and Delays (*verses* 21, 22).

Paul's plans here were, I think, in the (Holy) Spirit, not his own spirit as in the text. He needed to visit the Macedonian saints again, and Corinth. We shall see later how very important it was for him to go to Jerusalem, and Rome had long been calling to his spirit. All this he will carry out, but not as he thinks. The Spirit's general plans were known to him, but not yet the details. And still how much Asia gripped him. "A great door and effectual was open to him, and there were many adversaries" needing his attention (1 Cor. 16: 9). By sending two of his helpers (the word for deacon-helper) forward into Macedonia, Paul was able to get still some more "time for Asia."

g. "No Small Stir Concerning the Way" Raised by the Idol Traffickers (19: 23—20: 1).

"Stir" is a very moderate word for this disturbance. It came about because the progress of "the Way" was hindering business and because it was possible to utilize religious fervor and prejudice to support business jealousy and love

silversmith, who made silver shrines of [6]Diana, brought no little business unto the craftsmen; 25 whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this business we have our wealth. 26 And ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they are no gods, that are made with hands: 27 and not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute; but also that the temple of the great goddess [6]Diana be made of no account, and

[6]Gr. *Artemis.*

---

of gain. Ephesus was the center for the widespread worship of the supreme female divinity, Diana in Latin, Artemis in Greek. Here the Greek name had been appropriated for a figure of this goddess, rather rudely cut out of a stone which tradition said came down from Zeus (Jupiter, *verse* 35). This image was enshrined in the wonderful temple on which had been expended, and in which was deposited no end of rich treasure. Worshipers of the goddess would have miniature images of her, and shrines, in their homes and on their persons, and the traffic in these was a great business with which the success of Christianity would interfere seriously. Christianity always hinders wrong business and awakens still vigorous and sometimes violent opposition by such interference. The preachers are hated by the liquor traffickers today and missionaries by exploiting traders in all the East.

Demetrius conducted a manufactory of diminutive silver temples of Artemis and provided employment to a large number of laborers who were federated in labor unions developed in very high degree. It was easy, therefore, for Demetrius to get them together and arouse active opposition to Christianity. He made a direct appeal to the "gain" which they got out of this business. They could "see" for themselves how "this Paul" was cutting down the trade in Ephesus and they "were hearing" of similar effects all through the province where he had "turned away much people" (*verses* 25–27).

that she should even be deposed from her magnificence whom all Asia and [7]the world worshippeth. 28 And when they heard this they were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying, Great *is* [8]Diana of the Ephesians. 29 And the city was filled with the confusion: and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel. 30 And when Paul was minded to enter in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31 And certain also of the [9]Asiarchs, being his friends, sent unto him and besought him not to adventure himself into the theatre. 32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was in confusion; and the more part knew not wherefore they were

[7]Gr. *the inhabited earth.* [8]Gr. *Artemis.*
[9]That is, officers having charge of festivals, etc., in the Roman province of Asia.

Now, Demetrius combines the play upon religious fear. Not only were they losing business, but there was even danger that their "great goddess" was about to be "dragged down from her magnificence," her whom not only "all Asia," but "the inhabited earth" held in pious regard. There was about to be a religious catastrophe.

The anger of the workmen was thoroughly aroused, and they started a commotion, howling "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." The commotion spread throughout the city and, doubtless under the lead of Demetrius and the labor union men, all headed for the public theater where political assemblies were held.

On the way some of them "snatched up" Gaius and Aristarchus because they were companions of Paul. Paul himself, learning of it, desired to go in to defend his helpers and his faith; but "his disciples" would not allow it; and then some of the Asiarchs—men in charge of public worship, games and assemblies in Asia—because of their friendship to Paul, sent messengers urging him not to go ("give himself") into the theater, where they were no doubt seeking to quell the riot (*verses* 27–31). Riot it had now come to be, for they were yelling various things and the assembly was all in an uproar ("poured together"), most of them having no idea why they were there. Everybody joins a howling mob.

come together. 33 [10]And they brought Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made a defence unto the people. 34 But when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* [1]Diana of the Ephesians. 35 And when the townclerk had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great [1]Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from [2]Jupiter? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash. 37 For ye have brought *hither* these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius, and the craftsmen that are with him, have a matter against any man, [3]the courts are open, and there are proconsuls: let

[10]Or, *And* some *of the multitude instructed Alexander*
[1]Gr. *Artemis.* [2]Or, *heaven* [3]Or, *court* days *are kept*

We cannot now know what notion the Jews had in putting forward Alexander to speak in this mad crowd. Perhaps they wanted to declare that the Jews were blameless of any special agitation against idols. Possibly Alexander was a Christian Jew and the unbelieving Jews wanted to expose him. Guesses are easy and worthless. When the crowd saw a Jew trying to speak it united them in "one voice out of all" with mad enthusiasm for some two hours yelling about the greatness of their Artemis (*verses* 32–34).

At length the mob had somewhat exhausted itself, and "the townclerk," who kept the archives and presided at political assemblies, succeeded in getting in a word. He began by reminding them that there was nobody who did not know that Ephesus was the sacred center of the worship of Artemis and they ought not, therefore, to be raging so about it, but to "keep quiet" (*verse* 35f).

There they had, he went on, men guilty of no violation of the laws protecting religion and its worship. If Demetrius and his supporting laborers had a ground of complaint against anybody, "there were court-days held" and "there were proconsuls" (*verse* 38). Thus he set aside Demetrius and his party. Now turning to the general crowd he

them accuse one another. 39 But if ye seek anything about other matters, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For indeed we are in danger to be [a]accused concerning this day's riot, there being no cause *for it:* and as touching it we shall not be able to give account of this concourse. 41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

20 And after the uproar ceased, Paul having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had

[a]Or, *accused of riot concerning this day*

said if they sought to make any further inqury they should leave it to the regular assembly, which convened three times a month (*verse* 39). Finally the clerk pointed out the danger of a charge of riot on account of this coming together for which there was no reason. The Roman government was very strict in supervision of such gatherings, which might easily be turned to political revolution. It was now possible to dismiss the assembly. It is of interest to Christians to note that the word for assembly all through this passage is *ekklesia*, the word adopted for *church*.

(4) Much Exhortation in Macedonia. 20: 1f.

After the uproar Paul had the disciples gathered, and gave them encouraging exhortations before saying good-bye, to go into Macedonia. Luke passes over this ministry in Macedonia with the briefest reference. We know from the Corinthian letters that Paul was now gathering money among all his churches for the poor Christians in Palestine, that he was seeking to perfect the organization and plans of all the churches so that the work would go on successfully when he should have gone for a trip of years to Rome and Spain; that he was meeting the heresies and antagonisms of the Judaizers and other troubles.

In Macedonia he waited to hear from Corinth the effect of his letter (1 Corinthians), and then to send on the letter which we call Second Corinthians before his going. So that several months, and possibly a year, were occupied

gone through those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece. 3 And when he had spent three months *there*, and a plot was laid against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him [5]as far as Asia, Sopater of Berœa, *the son* of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 But these [6]had gone before, and were waiting for

[5]Many ancient authorities omit *as far as Asia.*
[6]Many ancient authorities read *came, and were waiting.*

---

in "going through those parts and giving much exhortation" before he "came into Greece." See especially Romans 15: 19 for his extensive labors in these regions.

(5) Three Months in Greece. 20: 2f.

Here again we have but one verse to tell a long story. Paul straightened out many tangles in the affairs of the numerous church of Corinth, wrote the epistle to the Romans, perfected his plans for getting his large collection to Jerusalem.

Just as he was about to sail for Syria he learned of a plot of the Jews against him and changed his plans, returning through Macedonia. He had arranged to have along with him quite a company of men, and examination will show that there was one representative, or more, from each territory from which he had raised the fund for the poor. Thus he was "taking thought for things honorable . . . in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8: 21). This large sum of money may have influenced the Jews in their plot, as well as their religious hatred. The attendants probably went all the way. "As far as Asia" (*verse* 4), is not a certain reading at all.

(6) A Determined Trip to Jerusalem, with Many Incidents on the Way. 20: 3—21: 16.

a. The Plot Sends Them by Troas (*verses* 3–12).

By dividing his company and changing plans, Paul evaded the plot. Luke here again appears in Paul's company—

John

us at Troas. 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we tarried seven days.

7 And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered together. 9 And there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, borne down with deep sleep; and as Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep he fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Make ye no ado; for his life is in him. 11 And when he was gone

---

"we," *verse* 6—to remain to the end of Acts. He thus got another touch of fellowship with his beloved church at Philippi. It was a very slow journey to Troas in five days (cf. 16: 11f).

We have not learned of a church at Troas before, but the previous stops here (at least two) and this seven days with so fine a company quite prepare us to find them "gathered together to break bread" the night before departing. This expression can hardly be interpreted except of the Lord's Supper. It was on "the first day of the week," and the inference that already this day was observed by Christians fits in with many indications. Whether Luke reckons the day as beginning at sunset, and so Saturday night, or at midnight, and so Sunday night here, we have now no means of determining.

Paul was holding a series of farewell meetings along the way. He had much to "discourse with them" about, and it is no wonder that he "stretched his speech along to the extent of midnight." The room had "many lamps" and their light and heat with the crowded condition of the room put Eutychus to sleep notwithstanding he was sitting on one of the low open windows, for Paul "discoursed yet longer." The young man tumbled through the window, falling two stories. He was taken up dead. Paul went down, declared that his life was still in him, proved it by restoring

up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the lad alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 But we, going before to the ship, set sail for Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, intending himself to go [7]by land. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15 And sailing from thence, we came the following day over against Chios: and the next day we touched at Samos; and [8]the day after we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

[7]Or, *on foot*
[8]Many ancient authorities insert *having tarried at Trogyllium.*

---

him, and he was still alive and all right next morning when Paul and his company left.

This incident would cause everybody to be wide awake. So they now "broke bread"—*i. e.*, had the Lord's supper—took some food, and Paul "extended his homily" until daybreak. It was a night to remember. Paul had talked long, and said much.

b. From Troas to Miletus (*verses* 13–16).

Paul needed some exercise after his strenuous night. He sent the ship with his company around the promontory to Assos while he refreshed himself with a walk of twenty miles across the isthmus and joined them there. In three days they were at Miletus. Pentecost was hastening on and Paul desired to be in Jerusalem with his collection at that opportune time. So he could not stop at Ephesus and "waste time in Asia," much as he desired to be there.

c. At Miletus, a Farewell to the Elders of Ephesus (*verses* 17–38).

Paul sent for the elders to come from Ephesus down to the seaport, Miletus, to see him. It was twenty-eight miles, and Ephesus could have been reached easily from Samos—reached, but not easily left by Paul. The elders seem to

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him
the [a]elders of the church. 18 And when they were come to
him, he said unto them,
Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot
in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, 19
serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears,
and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews;
20 how I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that
was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house

[a]Or, *presbyters*

---

have been quite a company. Remember that the church of Ephesus would include all Christians in, and in the neighborhood of, the city. Paul urges upon them, "Faithfulness in their Spiritual Office." The address reveals much about Paul to be learned only here. It especially reveals his tender sympathy and his pastoral heart, which are seen in other words of his also. Paul's heart is sometimes overlooked, because his mind is so powerful. Here we feel it throb and heave. He was a man of boundless soul.

First of all, he lays a foundation for his charge in his own example, and by that example shows what a good minister should be. The power of example Paul fully appreciated. In God's grace he set the example right and he calls on all ministers to be examples for their flocks (*verses* 18–27). Paul was able frankly to appeal to the testimony of these elders as to his conduct: "Yourselves know." His course had been consistent from the day he set foot in Asia "the entire time." He had had hardships but had "been the Lord's servant with full humility, and tears and testings, those that came upon him in the plots of the Jews," of which the elders would know the details (*verse* 19).

"Nothing of the things profitable" for the Ephesians had Paul held himself back from declaring to them and from teaching them, and that both in public where a crowd gathered and in the intimacy of the homes as he went into one after another. He had not spared himself, nor saved himself. And he had, as always, pressed both proclamation and teaching (*verse* 20). His teaching had been in the nature of

to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus [10]Christ. 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, [1]so that I

[10]Many ancient authorities omit *Christ.*
[1]Or, *in comparison of accomplishing my course*

---

personal testimony, as was the way of the early Christians and as Christ planned. He had included Jews and Greeks in his efforts, making no distinction. A ministry to all classes without partiality is by no means easy. Paul fulfilled it (cf. Col. 1: 28f). He sums up his gospel in two items. The arrangement of words in Greek is peculiar. Both the repentance and the faith are presented as aspects—parts of one whole; "the toward God repentance and faith." Both also lead "into our Lord Jesus." Repentance starts us and faith completes the entrance into the vital relation to the Lord. We repent of our sin against God and put trust in him as merciful and saving (*verse* 21).

Now Paul "is proceeding" to Jerusalem with such a conviction of duty that he feels bound in his spirit because led as a bondman of the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to decide whether the thought is approached from the standpoint of Paul's spirit or the Holy Spirit. In either case both ideas are involved. He does not know "the things that are going to meet him" in Jerusalem, save that in a general way in city after city as he goes along "the Holy Spirit continually testifies that bonds and tribulations are waiting for him." This testimony was partly in experience: these things attended him all along. In part, it was by specific prophetic messages, and this last is what Paul immediately refers to (*verses* 22f). Why, then, does he persist in going? The answer will be best presented at 21: 14. Paul was thus forced to estimate his own life and he had reached a definite conclusion: he was on no account making it a thing dear (high-priced) for himself, but was only concerned that his

may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the [2]gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God. 28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy

[2]Or, *good tidings*

---

life should be used to complete the course that had been set for him in God's plan, to complete the ministry which he got as a sacred service from the Lord Jesus. If he could do what the Lord had in mind when he called him that was the only use he had for life. In a word, that ministry consisted in thoroughly testifying of the good message of God's grace to sinful humanity (24, cf. Phil 1: 19–25; 3: 8–18).

The touching solemnity of the occasion is strongly put when in *verse* 25 Paul says, "And now I know that no longer shall you see my face, you all among whom I went about preaching the kingdom." According to the accepted tradition, Paul was again in Ephesus some eight or nine years later. If so, some of these men did see him in all probability. Paul might conceivably be mistaken. But it is well to observe exactly what he said, "No longer," not never again, would "they all," not no one of them, see him. They are not to have his presence and personal direction as they had in the days of beginning until recently.

Before separation, then, he declares to them on the very day of leaving that he is pure from the blood of all. He has done his full duty. He can say this because he did not hold himself back from declaring to them all the purpose of God. He had set forth God's plan, its content and its method. The word was complete. If they went wrong, no blame could attach to Paul who taught them the gospel. One cannot say that unless one has entered upon a ministry with that end in view (*verse* 26f).

Now, Paul makes his direct exhortation, but returns again to the appeal of his own course (*verses* 28–35).

Spirit hath made you [3]bishops, to feed the church of [4]the Lord which he [5]purchased with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Wherefore watch ye, re-

[3]Or, *overseers*
[4]Some ancient authorities, including the two oldest manuscripts, read *God*.
[5]Gr. *acquired*.

They need to take heed ("look out for") themselves and for all the flock. To Timothy, Paul writes, "Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching (1 Tim. 4: 15). Not, of course, look out for their own interest, but watch against defects and failures in themselves. The Holy Spirit has set them in the flock as overseers. Their position is holy. They must "shepherd"—not "feed" alone, but do all the things a shepherd's care requires—shepherd the church of God. The fact that it is God's church, again, makes it a solemn responsibility to be in charge of it. The reading God is decidedly preferable here, rather than Lord as in the text. Again, the position is sacred by reason of the cost of the church flock. God "got possession of it by means of the blood of him who was his own." This translation, easily possible, obviates the difficulty of "his own blood" being God's blood, which was the cause of the confusion in the reading. Thus Paul here introduces the Trinity in relation to the church. He often introduces the Trinity in relation to some phase of the work of redemption (*verse* 28).

It was sad experience with the Galatian churches, Corinth and Thessalonica that made Paul know that "grievous wolves" would come in. Worst of all, from the Ephesian elders themselves men would "stand up and speak perverse things" for the purpose of getting personal following in the flock, sacrificing the needs of the flock to personal conceit and ambition. Here, again, alas! Paul had had sad experience (*verses* 29f). His warning might delay the defection here. So he calls on them to keep watch, each on himself. It is not a call to maintain espionage on others. They will be helped

membering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears. 32 And now I commend you to [6]God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build *you* up, and to give *you* the inheritance among all them that are sanctified. 33 I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remem-

[6]Some ancient authorities read *the Lord.*

---

by keeping Paul's course in mind. In unselfish concern, even in tears, for three years, night and day, he continued without ceasing, reminding each one of his duty and his grace (*verse* 31).

Now he commends them ("turns them over to") the Lord (rather than "to God"), and "to the word" which tells "of the grace of the Lord." That word, if taken in its full force and meaning has power to build them up, to construct in each one character and ministry; and to give to them the inheritance which the gospel offers and which will place them among all that group that has been wholly set apart in Christ for God. Such is the meaning here of "them that are sanctified" (*verse* 32).

Paul feels that desire for personal gain, or at least for material comfort, will be a snare to the elders. So at last he reminds them that he had been free from that. His desire sought no man's silver, gold or clothing. They could themselves testify that his own hands, which he now lifted up before them, had supplied not only his own needs but the needs of his company of missionaries. He did not mean that he had wholly by personal labor supported his entire company. They would all understand. His hands had done subordinate service to meet the needs. He showed them a good example. It was necessary for them by toil to be able to aid the weak, and to keep in mind a saying of the Lord Jesus which Paul alone of New Testament writers has recovered for us. Someone has called it "the recovered beatitude." The saying uses present tenses of habit, not aorist

ber the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing, most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

21 And when it came to pass that we were parted from them and had set sail, we came with a straight course unto Cos, and the next day unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: 2 and having found a ship crossing over unto Phœnicia, we went aboard, and set sail. 3 And when we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And having found the disciples, we tarried there seven days: and these said to Paul through

---

tenses of single experience. We may get this force by rendering, "It is blessed rather to be a giver than to be a getter." It is thus a noble principle which makes a beautiful close to Paul's wonderful address (*verses* 33–35).

Now a prayer. The impressive order of the Greek is "having placed his knees with all them, he prayed." Jesus' saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I," surely was fulfilled that day.

The farewell was touching, in tears and kisses of manly affection. They "were in anguish especially" that "they were about no longer to look on Paul's face." But the time had come, and "they brought him forward into the ship."

d. Serious Warnings at Tyre, Caesarea, Etc. (21: 1–14).

Through the archipelago of southeast Asia Minor they sailed by day, stopping over nights in different ports for safety. At Patara, in Lycia, they changed to a ship sailing direct for Tyre, in Phœnicia (*verses* 1–3).

At Tyre, Paul's party "looked up the disciples," whom they knew to be there, and spent seven days with them. We cannot doubt that a ministry of strengthening filled these days and made them blessed. The Tyrean disciples

the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem. 5 And when it came to pass that we had accomplished the days, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell; 6 and we went on board the ship, but they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. 8 And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode

---

had, through some prophet perhaps, a message from the Holy Spirit on the basis of which they said to Paul for him not to go on to Jerusalem. The inference as to his duty Paul did not at all accept. The certainty of suffering is by no means always to be taken as a warning not to pursue a course. So when they had completed the days allowed for this stop, they were again taking ship. The entire Christian group, men, women and children, accompanied them, and a final farewell service was held on the sands of the beach. Then the farewells and embarking, while the local Christians returned to their homes (*verses* 4–6).

The destination of the ship was Ptolemais—modern Acre. **Here only one day was taken for rest, greetings to the local Christians and preparation for the land journey, by foot, forty miles to Cæsarea (*verse* 7).**

At Cæsarea the party remained some (literally "more") days (*verse* 10). At least Paul and Luke were entertained in the house of Philip, who is definitely identified as the worker of chapters 6 and 8, and now known as "the evangelist." This is twenty years after Philip's work in Samaria and Sharon. Meantime the evangelist has come to be recognized as a distinct function provided by the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 4: 11; 2 Tim. 4: 5), but not one found in all churches (see 1 Cor.: 12: 28). This minister had for his function evangelizing more thoroughly a community, or geographical section, after the gospel had been planted by a missionary

with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied. 10 And as we tarried there some days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we and

---

("apostle") in the city center. He was nearly what we call a home missionary, or a city missionary, not at all corresponding to our professional "evangelist."

It is the courteous recognition of a guest, as well as a record of the Holy Spirit's bestowal of the prophetic gift, that Luke preserves in *verse* 9. Women did not generally receive the gift of prophecy in the early churches, and they were never used for the general ministry, but their selection by the Holy Spirit for direct messages from God is recorded here and recognized by Paul (1 Cor. 11: 5, and see Luke 2: 36). When Paul a little later came to spend two years as prisoner in this city, Philip's family must have been of great help to him.

At *verse* 10 we meet another old friend, Agabus (see 11: 28). He is introduced here as if he were strange. But does every reader recall him now until reminded? We may note, too, the double introduction of Aristarchus (20: 4; 28: 2). Agabus came as a prophet from Jerusalem to which Paul was going. He adopted the picturesque and dramatic way of the ancient prophets (cf. 1 K. 22: 11; Isaiah 20: 2; Jer. 13: 1–11, etc.). Coming into the presence of a group of Christians, he took Paul's girdle and bound himself hand and foot. Then he explained, introducing his prophecy with the old prophetic formula, "Thus saith Jehovah," only for Jehovah he puts "the Holy Spirit"—incidentally a recognition of the deity of the Spirit.

His prophecy that in Jerusalem the Jews would thus bind the owner of the girdle and turn him over to the Gentiles—Jews and Gentiles combining in his persecution—aroused the disciples so that both the members of Paul's party and the

they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

---

local ("in the place") Christians united in the opinion that Paul must not go, and plied him with their appeals.

Paul was very deeply moved, but unshaken in purpose. They were making his duty very difficult for him, by their weeping, "smashing" his heart. "On his part—emphatic I—not only to be bound but even to die (going on) into Jerusalem he held himself ready in the interest of the name of his Lord Jesus."

It is time for us to inquire why Paul was so sure that the Lord's cause demanded his presence in Jerusalem that he regarded so many testimonies of the Holy Spirit that persecution awaited him as testings only of his courage and loyalty, and the entreaties of his friends as temptation and affliction. His epistles provide the answer. There were two widely divergent ideas of salvation in the early church. Paul was the champion of salvation that rested directly on the Lord Jesus through faith and of a religion that left the spirit free in its worship and fellowship. Yet Paul understood the other idea well. It called for Christ as the consummation of a system of law and ceremonial, and would have all men reach Christ through the system and worship in that system. There were two great dangers. One was that the ceremonial, Judaizing, party would prevail and so corrupt Christianity as to destroy its essential character and doom it to a mere religious sect. The other was that the people of God would be rent in twain and two denominations made. While this would free Gentile Christianity of the incubus of Judaizing elements it would also cut it off from historical connection with the revelation of God which in Paul's thinking would be fatal. Moreover, such a division would leave Judaic Christianity to destroy itself.

15 And after these days we [7]took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. 16 And there went with us also *certain* of the disciples from Cæsarea, [8]bringing *with them* one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

[7]Or, *made ready* [8]Or, *bringing* us to *one Mnason etc.*

Again, Paul shared the passion of his Master for the unity of Christianity as essential to its true representation of God's redeeming love. On all accounts a divided Christianity was abhorrent to him. He felt that by going now to Jerusalem with his great love offering for poor Christian Jews from their Gentile brethren, and by going over again with the leaders the points of understanding, the impending danger could be averted. And it was averted, even at so great a cost to Paul. If we thus truly interpret him we can understand how, like Jesus before him, "he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 51). Paul's friends at length found persuasion useless and "grew quiet," saying, "The Lord's will, let it be done," which sounds like submission without conviction.

c. Go to Jerusalem as Guests of Mnason (*verses* 15, 16).

At last they have made all preparations and go up unto Jerusalem. Some of the disciples of Cæsarea joined the company, either having among them or else conducting the company to Mnason, another Cyprian (cf. Barnabas), who had from early Christian days been a disciple, and who was now to be host to Paul and his friends in Jerusalem. Thus at last, after four years or more, Paul is here, and on a critical mission, A.D. 57 or 58.

7. The Great Missionary Becomes a Prisoner for Four to Five Years. 21: 17—28: 31.

(1) Paul and the Jerusalem Brethren Renew Their Fellowship and Agreement. 21: 17–26.

The Jerusalem brethren received the company with hearty greeting immediately upon arrival. Then, next day, as soon

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many [9]thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law: 21 and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children,

[9]Gr. *myriads.*

---

as they could get settled, Paul with some of his attendants whom Luke designates as "us," went before James, with whom were present also all the elders of the Jerusalem church. James was the president of the elders, and was claimed by the Judaizers as their leader and authority for their contentions (Gal. 2). Some ten or twelve years before this he had written his epistle. It was he who had presented, and probably had drawn, the agreement of the council eight years earlier (chapter 15). He and Paul then represented the two elements in the early church. They each have friends and supporters present and it is to be shown that they are still in hearty agreement. They meet with greetings by Paul, who now recounts to the conference in detail, "one by one each of the things God did among the Gentiles" through Paul's ministry (*verse* 19).

The Jerusalem brethren frankly glorify God for his work under Paul, and then proceed to set forth the critical aspects of the situation from the standpoint of Jewish Christians. There were "many myriads" of Jews that had come to believe and they were all still loyal zealots for the law (*verse* 20). These had been "misinformed" (literally "led down") concerning Paul, by the active and unscrupulous Judaizers and some Jews, probably, to the effect that Paul "was teaching apostasy from Moses" to all the Jews that lived among Gentiles. It was specified that he told them not to circumcise their children, nor to order their lives in accordance

neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is it therefore? they will certainly hear that thou art come. 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men that have a vow on them; 24 these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law. 25 But as touching the Gentiles that have believed, we [10]wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication. 26 Then Paul [1]took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple, declaring the fulfillment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them.

[10]Or, *enjoined* Many ancient authorities read *sent.*
[1]Or, *took the men the next day, and purifying himself etc.*

with the Jewish customs (*verse* 21). These charges, it must be frankly admitted, had produced a prejudice which would be aroused when it was generally known that Paul had arrived in Jerusalem (*verse* 22).

To forestall this excitement it was proposed (*verses* 23f) that Paul should prove that he himself "keeps step in guarding the law" by taking part in a ceremonial of the law which was not required, but was wholly voluntary. There were four Jewish Christians then under a vow which would shortly have to be discharged by shaving their heads and performing certain temple cleansing and offerings. It was proposed that Paul associate himself with these men, and as approving patron pay the cost of the temple exercises connected with the vow.

It is distinctly affirmed that the former agreement stands unquestioned and no new demands are to be made (*verse* 25).

Paul agreed, and on the next day, before he had made any open appearance in the city, associated himself with the four men, went through the ceremonial purification, entered the temple, announcing to the priests the terms and times of the vow, keeping it up until the proper offering in behalf of each one of them had been offered up. He went through it in all good faith.

27 And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. 29 For they had before seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.

Paul has been criticized for this, and it has been said that it was ineffective. He at least showed his willingness to do all possible to prevent a breach and misunderstanding. The thing he did, not being a required ceremonial, would not touch the doctrine of salvation apart from works of the law. And it does not appear that Christians were responsible for Paul's subsequent troubles. So far as the church was concerned, he saved the day.

(2) An Experience with a Howling Mob. 21: 27–22: 29.

a. The first assault (*verses* 27–29). This came when the seven days, for the purification, or of the feast of Pentecost (and the two may have coincided), were about to be completed, and it looked as if trouble was to be averted. "Some Jews from Asia," who would know of the riot at Ephesus, caught sight of Paul in the temple, and "stirred up all the multitude" then present, and laid hold on Paul, meantime yelling for all "Israelite men" to come to their assistance. They had here "the person who teaches everywhere in antagonism to the people (Jews), to the law and to this place; and he went so far as to bring even Greeks into the temple and so polluted ("made common") this holy place." Luke says that the ground for their charge was that these men had seen Trophimus, the Ephesian friend of Paul, with him out in the city and they took up the idea that Paul brought him into the temple, which is about as near the facts as excited anger is apt to get. If people would wait to learn the facts instead of acting on their *supposings*, most extreme action would be avoided.

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut. 31 And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the [1]chief captain of the [2]band, that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32 And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the [1]chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul. 33 Then the [1]chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and inquired who he was, and what he had done. 34 And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle. 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the

[1]Or, *military tribune* [2]Gr. *chiliarch.* [2]Or, *cohort*

b. "*All Jerusalem in confusion* (*verses* 30, 31). "The whole city was shaken, and there got to be a running together of the people." Thus Luke graphically tells the story of the rapid assembling of the mob that dragged Paul outside the temple. The doors were shut at once to save pollution. It mattered little if a man were maltreated and murdered, if only it were not done in the holy place! While they were seeking to kill Paul without committing sacrilege, a report ("saying") got up to the colonel of the Roman regiment, stationed in the Tower of Antonia, overlooking the temple for the purpose of preventing riots there.

c. Rescue (*verses* 32–36) came just in time. The colonel hurriedly ("on the instant") got soldiers and some captains ("centurions"), without taking time to organize them, and rushed down upon the crowd. This stopped the beating; but Paul was now taken in hand by the colonel, at his command bound by the soldiers with two chains, to two soldiers. That was the most obvious thing to do. In the confusion he found it impossible to learn "who Paul might be and what he had done." A mob never knows what it is doing, nor why.

As Paul was carried to the castle at the colonel's order, the mob saw that they were about to lose their prey, and under-

violence of the crowd; 36 for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the [4]chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek? 38 Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins? 39 But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people. 40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying,

22 Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence which I now make unto you.

2 And when they heard that he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet: and he saith,

[4]Or, *military tribune* Gr. *chiliarch.*

---

took to get him away. So violent were they that as he went up the stairs Paul was carried bodily by the soldiers.

d. A linguist and a citizen gains permission to speak (*verses* 37–40). Paul decides upon a course and requests the colonel's permission to speak to him. He expresses surprise that Paul knows Greek, for he had guessed that Paul might be "that Egyptian," a Jew who had come from Egypt professing to be a prophet from God, and who had collected a band of dagger assassins and marched to Mount Olivet with the promise that at their approach the walls of Jerusalem would fall down. Many of his followers had been slain, but the leader escaped, and it will be a fine catch if the colonel has now caught this bold outlaw.

But here was a frank, straightforward Jew, "a citizen of no mean city," courteously asking permission to make an address unto the people. With surprised courtesy, the colonel consented. Taking his stand on the stairs, Paul signified his purpose with his hand. Helpless now, and astonished, too, the mob "made a great silence," and Paul began in their Hebrew (Aramaic).

3 I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up
in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according
to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous
for God, even as ye all are this day: 4 and I persecuted
this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons
both men and women. 5 As also the high priest doth bear
me witness, and all of the estate of the elders: from whom
also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to
Damascus to bring them also that were there unto Jeru-

---

e. A great address from the secure position on the stairway. 22: 1–21.

Paul knew that if his experience could really be known to earnest lovers of God, they would be convinced of his sincerity and of the truth of his position. So he told his experience, at certain points stressing elements that should especially appeal to Jewish hearers. His form of address, "Gentlemen, brethren, and fathers," was a sincere appeal for a patient hearing of the "reasoned defense" of his course. His use of their native "dialect" pleased the audience and encouraged their greater silence (*verses* 1, 2).

Paul claims his Jewish nativity. To be sure he was born a Hellenist ("in Tarsus"), but his breeding had been thoroughly Jewish, for he was brought up there in the holy city, educated at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel, long now the most honored of rabbis. He was thus trained according to "the sharpness," or strict firmness "of our law." He was possessed by zeal for God, even as he was willing to recognize all of them were this day (*verse* 3).

When "this (new) Way" of the Christ arose, Paul had persecuted it to the extent of death. He bound and imprisoned men and women, so determined was he. He is able to produce as witnesses to his work of persecution their own high priest, and, indeed, all the body of the elders of the people. For from them he had his letters of authority when he went to Damascus to arrest "the brethren" there. Thus his first religious excursion into heathen territory had been to suppress "the Way" and to maintain the strictest Judaism.

salem in bonds to be punished. 6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, 13 came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I [5]looked up on him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be a wit-

[5]Or, *received my sight* and looked *upon him*

How the change came about in him he explains in the story of his conversion (*verses* 6–16), already studied in chapter 9. He explains here (*verse* 12) that Ananias who led him into the light, gave him God's message and baptized him (*verse* 16), was "a devout man according to the law," a good orthodox Jew who had been led to accept Jesus as his Christ; and that Ananias was a man of good standing with all the Damascene Jews.

Verse 14 is peculiar to this account. It is Paul's most distinct presentation to this audience of the claims of the Lord on them. Ananias had told Paul, "The God of our fathers"—name that looked back to all the prophetic history: "appointed ('placed his hand on before') thee to know his will"—so that their God was in Paul's career; "and to see the Righteous One"—a prophetic name for the Messianic Servant; "and to hear a voice from his mouth." All this was pressing home the claim that God had designated Jesus as the Messiah. Paul says that he was told from the

ness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name. 17 And it came to pass that, when I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, 18 and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles.

---

first that he must be a witness for this Righteous One. He had only been carrying out the specific will of their God (*verse* 15).

Again Paul recounts another experience with Jesus (*verses* 17–21). He was back in Jerusalem and was praying there in the temple—where they were at the moment—still a good Jew while a disciple of the Righteous One. While praying he had fallen into a trance ("ecstasy") and saw him.

Paul seems to avoid using the name Jesus in the address, except in *verse* 8, where it could not with truth and loyalty be omitted. In the trance Jesus had commanded him to "get out in haste out of Jerusalem" for the reason that there his testimony to Jesus would not be accepted. Paul had sought to argue that his career as a violent persecutor fitted him peculiarly as a convincing preacher to Jerusalem Jews. He says he reminded the Lord especially of the prominent part he had taken in the shedding of the blood of the martyr Stephen. By this he was reminding his auditors also of that ignoble murder which some of them had doubtless shared with him, and which they had just now sought to repeat upon his person. Incidentally, Paul here told (*verse* 19) that his inquisition as persecutor included "every synagogue."

Now (*verse* 21), the Lord cut short Saul's (Paul's) argument there in the temple by a peremptory order. "He said

22 And they gave him audience unto this word; and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air, 24 the [c]chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him. 25 And when they had tied him up [r]with the thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood

[c]Or, *military tribune* Gr. *chiliarch.* [r]Or, *for*

unto me, Proceed, for I (emphatic) unto the Gentiles afar will send thee." Paul has made his defense. He had sought permission to be a preacher to the Jews, but his living Lord who had captured him had, so to speak, compelled him to his Gentile ministry.

f. A Hateful Word Sets the Mob Off Afresh (*verses* 22, 23).

Jesus of Nazareth had sent Paul to the Gentiles. Such was Paul's defense. The word Gentiles excited all their anger again, and Paul's use of verbs of which Jesus was the unnamed subject had been an indirect way of attributing to Jesus supreme if not divine authority. The crowd went off in a wild frenzy. "Up to that (hateful) word" they listened. But at that they lifted up their own voices to shout, "Away from the earth with such a fellow; for it was not in the fit plan for him to live." They yelled, tore their clothes and flung dust into the air; like a lot of mad brutes.

g. Citizenship Arrests a Beating (*verses* 24–29).

Again (cf. 21: 34) the colonel orders Paul to be carried to the castle, and now that he be tortured by scourging to compel him to disclose the reason why the people were thus shouting against him. Torture of an accused man is an immemorial custom still practiced even in our own country. All police courts know of "the third degree." Physical torture is now seldom used except that suspects are made drunk to cause them to talk, and they are put under merciless physical strain of endurance.

by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 And when the centurion heard it, he went to the [1]chief captain and told him, saying, What art thou about to do? for this man is a Roman. 27 And the [1]chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yea. 28 And the [1]chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship. And Paul said, But I am *a Roman* born. 29 They then that were about to examine him straightway departed from him: and the [1]chief captain also was afraid when he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

[1]Or, *military tribune* Gr. *chiliarch.*

The soldiers had "stretched him forth for the thongs," just ready for the beating, when Paul asked the captain ("centurion") superintending it "whether it was legally possible to scourge a Roman man and him uncondemned?" It would not be lawful thus to maltreat a Roman citizen, even if he had been condemned. Paul's language puts the Roman citizenship first for emphasis. The centurion's ominous information (*verse* 26) brought the colonel himself to Paul's side in excitement. "Tell me," said he, "thou, a Roman citizen, art thou?" In splendid dignity Paul answered in one word, "Yes." "This citizenship" was awarded for distinguished service to the state, military or civil, and so by the expenditure of generous sums on public institutions or military equipment, etc. It was hereditary. The colonel declared that his had been procured at the cost of "a great sum." Paul's was the more honorable that he could say: "For my part, I was born" to my citizenship. The word translated citizen in 21: 39 is a general term, not the specific word for Roman citizenship.

The facts and the calm assertion of Paul's dignity and rights had a thrilling effect. "Immediately those who were about to examine (scourge) him stood off from him," and the colonel was in fear because this Roman citizen had been bound at his order, and it was in Paul's power to demand his punishment. But there was no revenge in Paul. He used his dignity for protection, not for pride or vengeance.

30 But on the morrow, desiring to know the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

23 And Paul, looking stedfastly on the council, said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day. 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

---

(3) Before the Sanhedrin, Paul Saves Himself by Strategy. 22: 30—23: 10.

a. The colonel's plan (*verse* 30). He would have Paul tried before the Sanhedrin of his own people. He was released from the rack, or whipping post, and kept in the castle until next day. The colonel, who was military governor, or commandant, of the city, ordered the assembling of the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin, and brought Paul down to be examined by them, hoping thus to get a clear statement of their accusation.

b. An apology for brushing against a white-washed wall (23: 1–5). Taking time for a steady gaze all round the group of the high religious court of his people, Paul began with fine courtesy and firm self-assertion: "Gentlemen, brethren," was his first word. Then, "I at every (dictate of) a conscience (that is) good have lived as a citizen for God up to this day." It was a great thing to be able to say, with no fear of honest refutation. As Jew and Christian he had a clear conscience because he had always been conscientious and always lived "to God."

The high priest, Ananias, was a notoriously haughty and overbearing Sadducee. He and a son had once been tried at Rome for opposition to her rule, but were acquitted. He flared up at Paul's bold self-assertion, and commanded those nearest Paul to smite him on the mouth.

Quite a few Christian critics find fault with Paul's spirit and lack of tact on this occasion. One would by no means assert that Paul was always in the right. But knowing

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? 5 And Paul said, I knew not, brethren, that he was high priest: for it is written, [g]Thou shalt not speak evil of a

[g]Ex. xxii. 28.

---

this body as Paul did, its intolerance and unreasonableness, it is hard to see what he could have hoped by a different course. We cannot avoid contrasting Peter and John, using every appearance before the Sanhedrin to preach Christ to them, and Paul boldly antagonizing them. Possibly Paul had done better to pursue the other course (but cf. 24: 12). Possibly he knew that God had already condemned them to hardness of heart. The meekness of Jesus under similar circumstances is not fully realized by Paul, but Jesus also vigorously denounced this same group on more than one occasion. Both courses have their place.

The essential and undignified injustice of the high priest excited Paul's resentment and he flung back the bold judgment: "Smite thee, God is about to do that, thou wall that has been white-washed. And thou, dost thou sit judging me in accordance with the law, and in violation of law command me to be smitten?"

From those standing around Paul, the Sanhedrin attendants, came the shocked reply, "The high priest of God dost thou revile?"

Paul's reply to this has caused much trouble, and without the tone in which it was spoken it is not possible to be sure of its import. Did Paul speak in sarcastic irony, or did he really not know which of the members had given the unjust command to smite him? If he had bad eyes, as so many suppose, or even if he had good eyes, he could still easily have failed to note who gave the unexpected command. It seems most probable that this was the case, and that Paul sincerely expressed regret at his hasty speech. Yet the judgment he pronounced was fulfilled on Ananias.

ruler of thy people. 6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great clamor: and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' part stood up, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: and what if a

---

He was deposed within a year, and when the Jewish war against Rome broke out, ten years later, was assassinated along with other Sadducean leaders.

c. A Bit of Strategy Starts a Helpful Row (*verses* 6–10).

Paul now took a new tack. Recognizing, as indeed he already knew, that there were two parties present, and knowing that his own old party of Pharisees was numerically superior and far more popular, he loudly acclaimed his identity with that party, and recalled also that he was "a son of Pharisees;" and that it was really concerning their characteristic hope, even resurrection of the dead, that he was on trial. At bottom, this was the truth, and this was the true ground of the Sadducean persecution, for they were rather friendly toward Gentiles. The Pharisees were made to forget for the moment their own anger with Paul for his Gentile gospel.

At once the two parties started "a dissension," and "the multitude"—the whole body—was "torn asunder." Their fundamental doctrinal differences are stated in *verse* 8. Out of these differences grew different political attitudes and variations in religious practices.

They were so excited, and so many plunged into the controversy that "there got to be" "a great clamor" ("shouting"). Pharisaic scribes "entered the fight," openly defending Paul. "They found no fault in him," which, indeed, was the simple truth. And they suggested a weighty consid-

spirit hath spoken to him, or an angel? 10 And when there arose a great dissension, the [10]chief captain, fearing lest Paul should be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

[10]Or, *military tribune* Gr., *chiliarch.*

---

eration by a conditional clause to which they left the conclusion to be supplied: "If (not "what if") a spirit or an angel did speak to him—?" They probably referred to Paul's account, the day before, of the two appearances of Jesus. The scribes did not suggest that it was Jesus, but that some spirit of one who had died or some angel of God might have spoken. Now the "dissension" grew so great that the colonel feared Paul would "be torn in pieces," and sent soldiers "to snatch him out of their midst" and return him to the castle.

(4) An Assuring Word from His Lord. *Verse* 11.

The situation indeed looked dark. No fair hearing could be hoped for, and the commandant was not likely to release Paul without a hearing. In the crisis his Lord came that night to his relief. His message was very brief, but pointed and definite: "Be bold" (one word in Greek). "For as thou hast faithfully-borne-thy-testimony (compound verb) as to the things that concern me into Jerusalem, so it is necessary for thee to carry-the-witness into Rome."

Thus the Lord approved Paul's going to Jerusalem against so much opposition, recognized his present distress, and gave him assurance that his longing to witness in Rome was a part of the divine plan. Paul, then, had not been mistaken. "The Lord stood by him" (2 Tim. 4: 17).

(5) Paul Escapes a Murderous Plot. 23: 12–35.

Here was a plot that must have left some men hungry.

12 And when it was day, the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 And they were more than forty that made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and the elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. 15 Now therefore do ye with the council signify to the [1]chief captain that he bring him down unto you, as though ye would judge of his case more exactly: and we, before he comes near, are ready to slay him. 16 But Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, [2]and he came and entered into the castle and told

[1]Or, *military tribune* Gr., *chiliarch.*
[2]Or, *having come in* upon them, *and he entered etc.*

---

a. The conspiracy (*verses* 12f) was made by more than forty men who placed-themselves-under-a-curse (verb made on the word *anathema*), if they should eat or drink before killing Paul.

b. They had *a shrewd scheme* (*verses* 14f) which they presented "to the chief priests and elders" who wickedly entered into it. The conspirators told fully of the severe oath they had taken. Now the leaders of the Sanhedrin must get the colonel in charge of Paul to consent to another hearing, so as more accurately to ascertain the facts about him. These facts the colonel would be eager to get himself. The conspirators would see to it that Paul never got near the Sanhedrin. The scheme seemed perfect.

c. A Shrewd Lad Thwarts the Scheme (*verses* 16–22). He was "Paul's sister's son." How we would love to know more of him and his mother! But this is not a biography. It is the story of the Holy Spirit's developing the gospel and the kingdom. The lad plays well his part for his distinguished uncle, and then he disappears as suddenly as he appears. By legitimately changing the punctuation we read that the young man "heard the lying in wait by coming along upon it," one of those providential "accidents" by which God directs affairs.

The young man must have had some of Paul's ability and determination, to gain admission at once to him so as to

Paul. 17 And Paul called unto him one of the centurions, and said, Bring this young man unto the [3]chief captain; for he hath something to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought him to the [3]chief captain, and saith, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and asked me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say to thee. 19 And the [3]chief captain took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, What is it that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask thee to bring down Paul to-morrow unto the church, as thou wouldst inquire somewhat more exactly concerning him. 21 Do not thou therefore yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, who have bound themselves under a curse, neither to eat nor to drink till they have slain him: and now are they ready, looking for the promise from thee. 22 So the [3]chief captain let the young man go, charging him, Tell no man that thou hast signified these things to me. 23 And he called unto him two of the centurions, and said, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and

[3]Or, *military tribune* Gr. *chiliarch.*

---

tell him. Paul's Roman citizenship gave large influence with the soldiers, so that a captain was ready to heed Paul's request and to present the nephew to the colonel for an interview.

The colonel grasped at the opportunity to learn anything, and took the young man for a private inquiry as to his message. The entire plot was clearly set before the officer with the closing statement (*verse* 21): "And now they are ready, expectantly awaiting the promise from thee."

There was hardly need for the strict charge of the officer that the young man should "tell out to nobody that he had revealed ('made clear') these things" (*verse* 22).

d. Thus it came about that while the conspirators were waiting eagerly for his blood next morning, Paul was *under military escort to Caesarea* (*verses* 23–35), the Roman capital of Palestine. The colonel was taking no chances. He set two captains to have ready by nine that night two companies —hundreds—of infantry, seventy cavalrymen, and two hundred spearmen. They were to get ready also beasts of bur-

spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night: 24 and *he bade them* provide beasts, that they might set Paul thereon, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. 25 And he wrote a letter after this form:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix, greeting. 27 This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be slain of them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. 28 And desiring to know the cause wherefore they accused him, [4]I brought him down unto their council: 29 whom I found to be accused about questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was shown to me that there would be a plot [5]against the man, I sent him to thee forthwith, charging his accusers also to speak against him before thee.[6]

[4]Some ancient authorities omit *I brought him down unto their council.*
[5]Many ancient authorities read *against the man on their part, I sent him to thee, charging etc.*
[6]Many ancient authorities add *Farewell.*

---

den for Paul and probably for Luke and other friends, since it was "beasts" and not a beast. At any rate, Paul would be allowed his baggage. They must deliver Paul in full safety (intensive compound) to Felix, the governor. So great an escort would make secure against a mob if the conspirators should learn what was doing.

Meantime the commandant prepares a letter to send to Felix (*verses* 26–30), and now we learn his name, introduced by Luke, however, only for completeness and accuracy. The letter with all proper formality presents the facts essentially as they have already been related, only he manipulates them so as to get more credit than he deserves for zeal in defense of a Roman citizen (*verse* 27). He makes it appear that he rescued Paul because he had found out that he was a Roman citizen, whereas he learned this later. He prudently omits that he had ordered Paul to be scourged. Nor, again, is there any evidence in the previous record to sustain Lysias' statement that he had recognized that Paul was guilty of no breach of law, in which case release would have been the proper course. Nor is it at all probable that

31 So the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 But on the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 and they, when they came to Cæsarea and delivered the letter to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when he had read it, he asked of what province he was; and when he understood that he was of Cilicia, 35 I will hear thee fully, said he, when thine accusers also are come: and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's [7]palace.

[7]Gr. *Praetorium.*

---

at the time Lysias had said anything to the accusers about appearing against Paul in Felix's court (*verse* 30), but as this was legally to be required he may be excused for anticipating the actual notice to the accusers.

By morning the cavalcade had gotten safely away from danger, although the location of Antipatris is uncertain. All but the cavalry escort returned to Jerusalem. They delivered Paul and the letter of Lysias in due form. Felix read the letter, made the necessary inquiry for docketing the case, promised a thorough hearing (compound verb) of the case whenever the accusers arrived, and ordered Paul to be kept under guard in the palace barracks. Thus he passed formally into the hands of the Gentiles and had seen Jerusalem for the last time. In him his Lord had again been rejected and cast out by the chosen people.

(6) Two Years Under Jurisdiction of Felix. Chapter 24.

Felix was a smart adventurer whose career had seemed to justify his name (Lucky). With his brother Pallas, a Greek slave of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius, they were both freed and Pallas became wealthy and very influential in political affairs. Felix got a military appointment in Samaria, and in 51 or 52 was made procurator in Syria. As a third matrimonial adventure he induced the beautiful Drusilla, youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I (chapter 12), to desert her husband, King Azizus of Emesa, for him, and thus allied himself with the Jews. She was

24 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with certain elders, and *with* an orator, one Tertullus; and they informed the governor against Paul. 2 And when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying,

Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation, 3 we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 But, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I entreat thee to hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pesti-

---

now about eighteen or twenty years of age, and one of the manuscripts of Acts attributes to her influence Felix's failure to give justice to Paul.

a. The trial before Felix (*verses* 1–23) came without delay. For by comparing the "five days" of *verse* 1 with the "twelve days" of *verse* 11, we see that it was five days from Paul's arrest and so but one or two days after his arrival that the Sanhedrin commission came to Cæsarea, the high priest and several "elders," "to enlighten" the governor against Paul. They had employed a Roman attorney, "one Tertullus," to present their case at this Roman tribunal.

Paul having been legally "called," Tertullus "opened" with the accusation (*verses* 1–8). He began with the formal and expected compliment to the governor-judge, and did not hesitate to exaggerate in his flattery. Felix had put down some robber bands and had scattered the band "of assassins" under the "Egyptian prophet" (see at 21: 38). But so far from "much peace" or the "correction of evils by his providence" he had already been in trouble with the Jews, and his removal two years later was largely due to this cause. So the "thankfulness" (a term which Jews would use for gratitude to God) was "in every respect and everywhere" chiefly the lawyer's flattering imagination. It was time for him to fear that he would prove "tedious" and to turn "briefly" (or "with condensation") to present his case (*verse* 5).

He made the general charge that Paul was "a pest" (not personal, "pestilent fellow"), or as, we say, *a common nui-*

lent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout [8]the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 who moreover assayed to profane the temple: on whom also we laid hold: [9]from whom thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so.

[8]Gr. *the inhabited earth.*

[9]Some ancient authorities insert *and we would have judged him according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8 commanding his accusers to come before thee.*

---

sance. The general accusation, then, had three specifications: (*a*) He was an instigator of uprisings among all the Jews throughout the inhabited world (*i. e.*, the Roman Empire); a forceful charge inasmuch as the Jews gave no little trouble to the authorities, and one who stirred them up to this would be a serious political offender; (*b*) Paul was furthermore "first rank man," or "champion" of "the heresy of the Nazarenes." If the Jews could succeed in repudiating Jewish Christians as not religiously Jews, then the Christian church had no standing as a "permitted religion" in the empire, and its aggressive championship would be a violation of law; (*c*) he even tried to desecrate the temple. The charge of actually taking Greeks in (12: 28) was no longer made. They knew no show of evidence could be found for that. They had prevented the desecration by laying hold on Paul, so they suggested, and now, if the governor will examine Paul he will be able to learn accurately concerning all the accusations made against him. *Verse* 7 and parts of *verses* 6 and 8 of the *Authorized Version* are lacking here. The case is not easy to determine, but in any event the omitted passage presents, with a partisan coloring, only facts already given in the story.

The Jewish delegation now agreed to the charges as presented by their "orator," declaring that their representative's presentation was according to the facts (*verse* 9).

10 And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered,
Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defence: 11 seeing that thou canst take knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem: 12 and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city. 13 Neither can they prove to thee the

---

The governor made a sign for Paul to reply. He did so in detail and with thoroughness (*verses* 10–12). He began with the necessary compliment to the governor, but it lacked the flattery of Lysias. He recognized the "many years" of Felix as judge for this nation and his consequent ability to recognize the force of Paul's reply, which he therefore made "cheerfully." Felix had been procurator six or seven years, and held a minor position some years before that. Paul did not even use the honorific "most excellent Felix" (cf. *verse* 3), our **"your excellency."**

The general charge of being "a pest" Paul very properly ignored. Of the specific charges, he began with the last (*verses* 11f). It was now not more than twelve days since he went to Jerusalem, hardly time to have raised such serious disturbance, and it should be easy to show specific acts if he had committed any wrong. He had gone there for the purpose of worshiping. Here Paul is probably not referring to the specific connection with the men under the vow. This was arranged after his arrival. He loved the temple and would always love to worship there. Then he would know and plan that some Jewish worship would be necessary in connection with his Christian mission to Jerusalem. He had been detected in no violation in the temple. Touching the charge of instigating riot, he assumed that the recent rioting in Jerusalem, reported in Lysias' letter, was the best specific case to deal with (*verse* 12). He had not been found "disputing with any one," or "stirring up a crowd" (literally "making a stopping of a crowd"). He had not been in any way the cause of a crowd being collected by halting people in the

things whereof they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; 15 having hope toward God, which these also themselves [10]look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust. 16 [1]Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always. 17

[10]Or, *accept* [1]Or, *On this account*

moving multitudes. Not only had he not done this in the temple, but equally he had not in (any of) the synagogues, nor about the city. We can now understand why Paul had not sought on this visit to make converts.

Generally speaking on the charge of sedition, Paul affirms that they cannot establish the things they are right now accusing him of, implying the charge of accusing without evidence. Of the remaining charge we have what we may call "confession and avoidance." He modestly makes no mention of the primacy of Christian leadership of which he was accused. He does confess that "after the Way which they call heresy"—he does not admit that it is—he serves. He claims, however, that this is "service of the God of our (Hebrew) fathers," not a violation of his ancestral faith. He believes all the things that accord with the law (of Moses), and that are written in the (records of the) prophets, holding a hope which looks directly to God, that which these accusers themselves cherish expectantly, namely, that there is going to be a resurrection. It does not seem that it would be needful for Paul's purpose for him to explain that just and unjust are included in the resurrection. It looks as if he were here pressing home an important truth. So, also, the next claim has a double value.

This hope and judgment were practical for Paul and caused him on his own part ("myself") "to take pains" to have always "an unoffended conscience" (one that had not been called on to condemn wrong in self) both as it relates to God and as it relates to men (cf. his claim in 23: 1).

Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation, and
offerings: 18 [2]amidst which they found me purified in the tem-
ple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult; but *there were* cer-
tain Jews from Asia—19 who ought to have been here before
thee, and to make accusation, if they had aught against me.
20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrong-doing they
found when I stood before the council, 21 except it be for
this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching
the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before
you this day.

[2]Or, *in* presenting *which*

Ananias and any other Sadducees among the accusers would not agree with Paul's resurrection doctrine, but the most of them would be Pharisees and would agree. If the Sadducees dissented and started controversy, it would hurt their cause, not Paul's.

Paul has now answered all the charges and proceeds to tell of his recent visit to Jerusalem (*verses* 17ff), in which alone it was possible to base any charges at the present time. After an absence of several ("more") years, he had come, bringing (literally "for making") alms unto his nation. He does not explain that these were for Christians, for he has already insisted that Christian Jews are none the less thoroughly Jews. He would also have made offerings, and it was while engaged in these that he was taken ("found") in the temple, purified, according to regular Jewish custom.

Paul here repeats (see *verse* 12) that he was not connected with a crowd or a tumult. He then starts to tell how the Jews from Asia provoked the riot, but the sense of injustice and outrage in the whole proceeding so arouses him that he dramatically breaks off, first to declare that these Asian Jews ought to be here in court to accuse if they knew anything, and, second, to demand that these men who are here tell what fault they found in him when he stood before the Sanhedrin, which they officially represent.

Paul suggests that they might have objected to the one word (topic), the resurrection of the dead, concerning which

22 But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning
the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias the [3]chief
captain shall come down, I will determine your matter. 23
And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept
in charge, and should have indulgence; and not to forbid
any of his friends to minister unto him.

[3]Or, *military tribune* Gr. *chiliarch.*

---

he cried out when before them, and so that they had him on trial about that. Paul was quite within the record here, for no charge at all had been preferred in the Sanhedrin, and no topic discussed but the resurrection. And he could dare the accusers to take that up here. They seem to have recognized their embarrassment.

The decision (*verses* 22, 23) was a postponement of the case. Felix knew personally too much about "the Way" of the Christians to be misled. He knew well enough that thus far no case had been made, and that none could be made, on the charges as presented by Tertullus. But it might be wise to hear Lysias in person. This gave an excuse for delay, and he had heard of money which Paul handled, and already he knew that Paul had friends.

b. Paul Preaches to Felix (*verses* 24–27).

One old manuscript says that it was Drusilla who first suggested hearing Paul, but Felix himself would be likely to inquire "concerning the faith in (literally *into*) Christ Jesus," out of curiosity and to cultivate Paul. But when he had sent for him and heard him once, it was enough of preaching. For Paul took his opportunity most seriously, and his earnestness was contagious. He reasoned of righteousness, of self-control, and of the judgment that impends. Paul's doctrine of righteousness was fully developed long before this, and we can well understand how he would present it. Christian righteousness involves ethical conduct, of which self-control ("keeping a firm hold on oneself" is nearly the idea of the Greek word) is the central feature. And all men must face God in judgment on the basis of

24 But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, [4]his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me. 26 He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul: wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But when two years

[4]Gr. *his own wife.*

---

righteousness as a quality and as a life. Felix and his wife were good subjects on whom to urge these basal life principles. Tacitus says of him that "he reveled in cruelty and lust, and wielded the power of a king with the mind of a slave." At any rate, unrighteousness and self-indulgence characterized both of them.

"Felix becoming terrified," rather than penitent, evaded the issues. He sought by emphatic expressions about time to make the impression that he was really interested and desired to hear further. It is often said that Felix never found the "convenient season," nor had another opportunity. But *verses* 26, 27 quite refute this idea. When Paul told of going to Jerusalem to distribute alms for his nation, Felix thought he saw possibilities of money as a persuader in Paul's case before him. This hope prompted him "rather frequently" to send for Paul and converse with him. He had abundant opportunity, but when he temporized and would not allow his conviction to lead on to repentance, he was hardened and we hear no more of his "trembling" under Paul's words. That is the spiritual lesson.

It was this hope of a bribe that caused Felix to see that Paul got all the freedom possible to a prisoner (*verse* 23). He was to be kept under guard, not in prison, and to have "moderation" in his confinement, and particularly no one of his "intimate friends" was to be hindered from ministering to him, literally, "doing servant duty for him." Felix wanted him to have full opportunity for communicating with the sources of his finances.

were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds.

25 Festus therefore, [5]having come into the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Cæsarea. 2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they besought him, 3 asking a favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem; laying a plot to kill him on the way. 4 Howbeit Festus answered, that Paul was kept in charge at

[5]Or, *having entered upon his province*

Thus Paul was held two years, until Felix was "succeeded by Porcius Festus." Then Felix wanted to conciliate the Jews ("to lay up favor with")—he might hope to return—and this consideration caused him to leave Paul bound still. Graft and politics prevented justice, in those ancient days.

(7) A Period Under Porcius Festus. Chapters 25, 26.

Little is known of Festus. His administration, under difficulties, is supposed to have been unusually just and faithful for Palestine in those days.

a. A Fresh Plot of the Jews (25: 1-5).

When the new governor had come to his province, as soon as possible, after only three days, he went from the legal, political capital up to Jerusalem, the sacred religious capital, to meet the Jewish leaders. This compliment would help no little in getting on with the people. The chief priests and "first men" lost no time in seeking to get hold of Paul. The bitterness against Christianity was now acute. They undertook to give information against Paul, but they also "urgently pleaded, asking as a favor," that Festus would send for Paul to be brought to Jerusalem. They could plead that this would be much more convenient than for them to accuse him at Cæsarea. This would give an opportunity to slay Paul *en route*. Festus was new to his position, but he was evidently not so easily fooled. He replied that Paul was

Cæsarea, and that he himself was about to depart *thither* shortly. 5 Let them therefore, saith he, that are of power among you go down with me. and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him.

6 And when he had tarried among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and on the morrow he sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he was come, the Jews that had come down from Jerusalem stood round about him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove; 8 while Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar, have I sinned at all. 9 But Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things

---

safely and legally under guard, that he was himself going back very shortly and that the proper course would be for "the able men among them to go along with him" and establish "anything improper" in Paul.

b. Tried by Festus, Compelled to Appeal to Caesar (verses 6–12).

As nothing else could be done, the Jews went down with Festus and he set the trial for the next day.

The Jews surrounded Paul when he came in, and sought to carry the case by storm, "bringing down on him many and grave charges." They had, however, the serious drawback of not being able ("were not strong") to establish the charges. Paul replied by a vigorous denial. The original charges were really all that could be brought against him. He had not violated Jewish law; he had not desecrated the temple, against which there was a severe Roman law; he had done nothing against Cæsar. He did not sin at all in any of these respects, religious, ethical or political.

There was no case. Still Festus wished "to lay up favor with the Jews," and asked whether Paul were willing to go to Jerusalem, where Festus would himself try him. He did not venture to propose another hearing before the Sanhedrin. He would compromise thus far.

before me? 10 But Paul said, I am standing before Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. 11 If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is *true* whereof these accuse me, no man can [6]give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar: unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

13 Now when certain days were passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Cæsarea, [7]and saluted Festus. 14

[6]Or, *grant me by favor.* [7]Or, *having saluted*

Paul knew the wiles of the Jews, and he was disgusted with the politic temporizing of his imperial judges. With spirit he asserted his right as a Roman citizen: "I have my stand at the judgment-seat of Cæsar where I must be judged. (He demanded it.) In no respect did I wrong Jews (not "the" Jews), as also thou (emphatic) dost know all too well." Paul used two word devices for affirming that Festus knew clearly that he was innocent. But he goes on: "If therefore (here at the right place for trial), on the one hand, I am a wrong-doer and have done anything worthy of death, I do not beg off even from dying: if, on the other hand, nothing is (true) of the things of which they accuse me, no man has power to use me (emphatic) as a favor to them. To Cæsar I appeal."

It was a bold, straight speech, and set the governor back a bit. He called into council the advisers of his court, and then formally granted the appeal. Paul felt driven thus to repudiate the Jews and to make full use of his Roman rights (see 28: 19).

c. Festus Seeks Counsel of Agrippa (*verses* 13–22).

It was polite and prudent for subordinate and neighboring rulers to make official social visits to the new governor. Herod Agrippa II (see in chapter 12), ruling king over a small territory in northern Palestine, and Bernice came very soon with their salutation. He was about thirty years old

And as they tarried there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix; 15 about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, asking for sentence against him. 16 To whom I answered, that it is not the custom of the Romans to [s]give up any man, before that the accused have the accusers face to face, and have had opportunity to make his defence concerning the matter laid against him. 17 When therefore

[s]Gr. *grant me by favor.*

---

now, and had for several years been king. He had been given a large measure of authority in strictly Jewish affairs because, no doubt, he had at Rome affected great interest in them, and on at least two occasions succeeded in having officials punished for wronging them in Palestine. Now he had a palace at Jerusalem and authority to determine who was high priest. Only recently he had deposed Ananias and set up Ishmael. He was just now not on good terms with many Jewish leaders.

Bernice was Agrippa's sister. She had first married one of her uncles, then, upon his death, lived with her brother at Rome until she again married to stop scandalous talk in connection with Agrippa. When he went to his kingdom she deserted her husband and went openly to live with her brother.

Agrippa's coming was opportune for Festus. He understood Jewish law, customs and temper, and could give needed advice in framing a statement to the emperor about Paul's case, when there really was no case against him. So Festus laid it before Agrippa and asked his help (*verses* 14–22). He gives the main facts quite fairly. In *verse* 10 he presents his answer more fully than it is reported in *verse* 5, and it is probable that Festus made now a good deal more of the Roman "custom" of justice than he did to the Jews. Rome did pride itself on "justice," like the British today, but by no means gave it universally.

Festus does suggest that the Jews wanted the "condemnation" of Paul "as a favor." He calls attention (*verse* 17) to

they were come together here, I made no delay, but on the next day sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought. 18 Concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed; 19 but had certain questions against him of their own [9]religion, and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept for the decision of [10]the emperor, I commanded him to be kept till I should send him to Cæsar. 22 And Agrippa *said* unto Festus, I also [1]could wish to hear the man myself. To-morrow, saith he, thou shalt hear him.

23 So on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and they were entered into the place of hearing with the [2]chief captains and the principal men

[9]Or, *superstition*
[10]Gr. *the Augustus.*
[1]Or, *was wishing*
[2]Or, *military tribune* Gr. *chiliarch.*

---

the promptness with which he heard the case. He was surprised, he says, that the accusers did not charge Paul with any vicious thing, such as he had gotten in his mind, and naturally enough from the clamor made about him. Instead, he found them urging "certain questions concerning their peculiar-fear-of-the-gods (not the dignified word for religion), and about a certain Jesus that had died, whom (the) Paul said to be alive." We cannot wonder that Festus was in perplexity how even to inquire into this case (*verse* 20). Even its terms were strange to him.

He tells, truly, how he asked Paul's consent to a hearing at Jerusalem, and how Paul had appealed his case so as to be protected for (the decision of) "the August One," as Festus here designates the emperor. Cæsar is, of course, a general title for Roman emperors, the same as Kaiser, Tzar, Kahn, etc.

Agrippa was not only interested to help Festus now, but "on his own account (even myself) had been wishing to hear the man." He does not state it as a request, except by intimation. Festus was quite ready. It would be arranged for "tomorrow."

of the city, at the command of Festus Paul was brought in.
24 And Festus saith, King Agrippa, and all men who are
here present with us, ye behold this man, about whom all
the multitude of the Jews made suit to me, both at Jerusa-
lem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.
25 But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of
death: and as he himself appealed to [s]the emperor I deter-
mined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing

[s]Gr. *the Augustus.*

c. Festus Entertains Agrippa and His Court with a Sermon by Paul (25: 23—26: 29).

It was a notable state occasion which Festus made of it (*verse* 23). The hearing was had not in the usual justice hall, but in the public audience chamber ("place of hearing"), where receptions and entertainments were given. Agrippa brought his queen with great display, and there were assembled with them the military officers ("commanders of thousands") and the men of the city (who were invited) on the ground of prominence ("outstanding"). Agrippa was given the seat of honor and judgment and Festus, when he had had Paul brought in, still chained to a soldier, presented the case, to all the dignitaries, as a matter of politeness, but especially to the king (*verses* 24–26).

While it was not literally true that "all the multitude of the Jews" had besieged ("hit in upon") him either in Jerusalem or here (in Cæsarea) the vehemence of the leaders had made Festus feel that they represented the unanimous wish of "the multitudes," for they had even cried as if in distress and needing help (so the Greek word) that Paul "must not live any longer" (*verse* 24). Festus says, "But I (emphatic) got hold of nothing he had done worthy of death." Then he seems to put the blame on Paul for the present dilemma. "This one had himself taken appeal to the August One." He had decided to send him, but really, now, "anything safe to write about him to the lord (Cæsar) he did not have" (*verse* 26a), and it rightly seemed to him "a senseless thing to be sending on a prisoner and not even to give a

to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, king Agrippa, that after examination had, I may have somewhat to write. 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not withal to signify the charges against him.

26 And Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand, and made his defence:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before thee this day touching all the things

---

sign as to the charges against him" (*verse* 27). So his hope and purpose is that when this examination of Paul is over he may have some answer to the disturbing question in his mind: "What shall I write?" (The Greek so puts the question in its direct form.)

Agrippa takes charge and gives Paul permission ("it is turned over to thee") to speak (26: 1). The apostle "made his defense" in an address that has for centuries been recognized as one of the foremost examples of splendid eloquence in any literature (*verses* 2–29). It is a nobly frank, incisive statement of the self-consistency of his life as Pharisaic Jew and Christian Jew and of the consistency of that life with the Jewish faith, rightly interpreted. He gives adequate reasons for his acceptance of Christianity, in the story of his conversion, and for his Gentile ministry in his call by the Lord Jesus. So very reasonable does it all appear to him and so powerfully does his double passion for his Lord and for the souls of men grip him as he tells the story that he cannot but appeal to Agrippa to agree with him and to accept Jesus as the saving Messiah.

It will not be needful to repeat what has been said concerning the details of Paul's conversion in chapters 9 and 22. He adapts his speeches to his hearers and this has marks of originality. It is a great thing when the best defense of one's conduct is the frank story of one's life.

Paul first felicitates himself on the privilege of making his defense before Agrippa because he is in the highest

whereof I am accused by the Jews: 3 [4]especially because thou art expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. 4 My manner of life then from my youth up, which was from the beginning among mine own nation and at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 having knowledge of me from the first, if they be willing to testify, that after the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand *here* to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; 7 unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. And con-

[4]Or, *because thou art especially expert*

---

degree expert in all customs that maintain among Jews, and in all questions pertaining to them. This was true of Agrippa, for he had made it a point to know all this. From boyhood he had hoped to be king of all Judæa and, while he had missed that ambition, he was young, and the chance was by no means gone.

Nor was the compliment to Agrippa any reflection on Festus, seeing that he had confessed openly that he did not understand how to approach this subject. Paul, then, asks for a patient ("long-interested") hearing (*verses* 2f).

The course of his life all the Jews knew from his youth on; that from its beginning it had been among his own people, and then much of it in Jerusalem (*verse* 4). They did not have to go back after they were angered with him and look up his record, for "if they but be willing to testify" to the truth, they had already known him fully all the way up, and that in accordance with the most exacting sect of their Hebrew cult (form of religious expression) he lived a Pharisee. So far no Jew could question his behavior as a Jew.

He next affirms that he still ("now") while under process of trial, takes his stand (perfect tense) on the great central "hope" which was grounded in that wonderful "promise made of God unto our fathers" (*verse* 6), unto the fulfillment and realization of which promise "our twelve-branched" race "serving in eager expectancy night and day cherish the

cerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, O king! 8 Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead? 9 I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. 11 And punishing them oftentimes in all

---

hope of arriving." He has found that which all Hebrews long for as the goal of their religion. Amazing as it may seem, "it is concerning this hope, O king! that I am under accusation by Jews" (not "the Jews." Paul could except very many and hence did not use the article).

Here Paul addresses to the whole audience—"you," not "thee," as in verse 3—the persuasive question: "Why is it judged incredible if (the) God raises dead bodies?" (8).

Paul now comes to the story of his change of attitude toward Jesus the Nazarene. "Well, then," resuming his story after the appeal to conviction, he says, "I (emphatic) thought in myself that against the name of Jesus the Nazarene it was my duty to do many opposing things." He had at first interpreted his Judaism as so many Jews were still interpreting theirs. And he put thought into deed. He shut up many of those who were dedicated to God ("saints") through the Nazarene in more than one prison (plural). He worked with the official authorities, "having got the authority that comes direct from the chief priests." When the saints were "lifted up" to death he "voted against them," if this is the correct translation. The passage has been the basis of much speculation. If he formally voted he was a member of the Sanhedrin, a fact which would almost certainly have been mentioned in at least one of the passages like this. I venture to suggest a translation which wholly removes the difficulty: "I procured the adverse vote," *i. e.*, it was on his testimony or that which he provided, and the condemnation was the result of his activity.

Paul says, in *verse* 11, that taking in all the synagogues he oftentimes in visiting vengeance on the saints sought

the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. 12 [5]Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against [6]the goad. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But arise, and stand upon

[5]Or, *on which errand* [6]Gr. *goads.*

---

to make them blaspheme, *i. e.*, to repudiate or say contemptuous things against Jesus. The verb in itself may be translated either "made them blaspheme" or "sought to make them blaspheme," and the latter is preferred, both because it is more creditable to the followers of Jesus and because there is no evidence in the New Testament that any of them did thus betray the Lord.

Paul says that his insane anger with the Christians was so "overflowing" that he pursued them in persecution even into the outside cities. Again he calls attention to his immediate and representative relations to the chief priests. His change was not planned and treacherous, but induced by the living Jesus Christ. This brings him (*verses* 12ff) to the experience along the road before Damascus, the emotional thrill of which causes him to address the king again to arouse his alert attention. He saw "from heaven beyond the bright shining of the sun, having shined around him, a light, and (around) those making the journey with him." For the statements in apparent conflict between this and the other accounts, see at chapter 9. Paul here recalls that the voice of the Lord was in his sacred "Hebrew dialect." The kicking against the goads of conscience and memory, of idealism and breeding is mentioned here.

Paul reports Jesus as using language similar to that of Jehovah to Ezekiel (2: 1f) and Daniel (10: 11), introducing his call (*verse* 16a). There was no need here to tell the

thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things [7]wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; 17 delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, 18 to open their eyes, [8]that they may turn from darkness to light and

[7]Many ancient authorities read *which thou hast seen.*
[8]Or, *to turn them*

---

part played by Ananias in Paul's conversion, and so much historical narrative would have hindered the dramatic impression of his address. He, therefore, reports his call and commission as a single event.

And we must not overlook that this was a distinct apostolic (missionary) commission. In essential features it is parallel to that to the Twelve and other earlier disciples (Luke 24). It was personal and came to him directly. We may compare Peter's personal commission (John 21).

The Lord, thus, commanded Paul to "stand up and stand on his feet," while he explained that he had appeared to him for this definite end, to put-him-forward-by-hand (which recalls passages in Isaiah) to be a servant and a witness both of what he had already seen and of the things the Lord would yet cause to be seen by him." The Lord was taking him definitely in hand. Long afterward, and some while even after this narrative, we shall find Paul reaching out eagerly to "lay hold on that for which he was laid hold on by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 12). He knew from the first that it would involve persecution, for the Lord was going to "lift him out" from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles. And he was told from the start that the Lord was sending him especially to the Gentiles, although it was some years before he fully accepted the force of this fact.

What Paul was to do for the Gentiles he now reports with a clearness and balance of statement gained in blessed, if often bitter, experience, but the Lord had given him the call at the start (*verse* 18). He was "to open their eyes so as to turn them away from darkness into light (cf. a beautiful

from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. 19 Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judæa, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of [9]repentance. 21 For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple, and assayed to kill me. 22 Having

[9]Or, *their repentance*

---

expression of this in Col. 1: 13), and from the authority (control, therefore,) of Satan unto (the) God;" or, stating it differently, "so that they would get remission of sins and a share among those who have been set apart for God by faith, that faith which is in me (Jesus)." Such was Paul's report of his call by Jesus the Christ from heaven. He had condensed in these few words the passion and purpose of his Christian career, the glory and majesty of the work God had done in him; and he had told its cause. There are many in our day who think they know better than Paul how it came about. Paul's explanation involved a force which made his little finger greater than the thighs of all his critics for redeeming men and for promoting the kingdom of God.

Paul is now ready to tell of his career as a captive and a prophet of Christ (*verses* 19ff), and again he calls upon King Agrippa for attention. Paul is no longer giving his defense chiefly; he is preaching the gospel to a king and to a procurator, and to their courts. He states his obedience "to the heavenly vision" negatively—"he did not get to be disobedient," *i. e.*, "did get to be obedient." In Damascus first, then in Jerusalem and all the country of the Jews, and to the Gentiles he announced, according to his commission, that they were to repent and turn about to God, practicing works that were befitting the repentance they professed.

It was on account of these efforts to turn men from sin to God and induce them to lead worthy lives that Jews (again Paul does not say "the" Jews), having grabbed him in

therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; 23 [10]how that the Christ [1]must suffer, *and* [10]how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.

[10]Or, *if* Or, *whether* [1]Or, *is subject to suffering*

---

the temple, tried to tear him to pieces (*verse* 21). Paul's statement about his preaching to Jews (*verse* 20) is literally an exaggeration. What he means is that he has not repudiated Judaism nor neglected Jews in his Christian ministry. He has interpreted his religion in terms of humanity and of God as the God of all men, and so has preached to all alike. Still as a Jew he has first fully pressed his message home to his own race. His whole career justifies the claim.

Now, summing up (*verses* 22f), Paul says that in spite of the Jews' violent opposition, by calling for outside help, namely, that which is from God, he had stood and was still standing and bearing his testimony to both small and great. He was not asking help from outside human sources, he was asking only for righteous freedom to bear his testimony. "To small and to great," is a covert suggestion that he is now testifying of his faith to the assembled "great."

Once more he affirms that his gospel is in strict harmony with his religion. This claim is not merely defensive; it is affirmative of the unbroken purpose of God's grace as coming to its climax in Jesus Christ. In all his ministry, Paul had said "nothing that lay outside the essential and true teaching of the prophets." All that Paul affirms as true in Jesus the prophets had said was to come into being. "Nor has he gone outside Moses," for the meaning of the religion which Moses organized was realized and interpreted in Christ Jesus (*verse* 22).

Paul is proceeding (*verse* 23) with a summary of his gospel when Festus interrupts. The translation "how that" is at least defective (see marginal notes). It seems that the unexpected form of Paul's sentences is intended to suggest that

24 And as he thus made his defence, Festus saith with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning [2]is turning thee mad. 25 But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and sober-

[2]Gr. *turneth thee to madness.*

---

his teaching is not just dogmatically affirmed to be in accord with the Old Testament and the ancient religion, but that he reasons rather (cf. 17: 2; 18: 4, 19; 24: 25, etc.), raising and discussing such vital questions as these: "Whether the Messiah as presented in the Old Testament, and in the nature of sinful conditions, was to be a sufferer;" "Whether the Messiah first of all by resurrection of the dead was leading the way to proclaiming light both to the Hebrew people and to the Gentiles, *i. e.*, to all men" (*verse* 23).

Here Festus broke in on Paul's reasoning and the list of fundamental questions remains incomplete. Much that Paul had said must have been very new and strange to the Roman governor, newly come to these parts and compelled to take them up. Paul's learning seemed so profound, his great vital questions so searching, and especially his personal enthusiasm so at white heat, that Festus had a sense of awe, and himself grew excited, if Luke has exactly reported his words (or a translation of them). He spoke in a high voice: "Thou art mad, Paul: the much, thee, learning into madness is turning"—quite awkward, to be sure (*verse* 24).

The perfect poise and courtesy of Paul's reply (*verse* 25) show how sanely he was uttering-forth (a word of high dignity, and even suggesting speech by inspiration, as over against insane spirit possession) word (*i. e.*, matters) of truth and sobriety of mind. He was dealing with truth and seeing it with no distortion of vision. This is by no means the first time Paul has been suspected of insanity (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 11, 13), even as was Jesus (Mark 3: 21; John 10: 20, etc.). It is a sad commentary on human nature that men who are enthusiastic for the deep things of the Spirit subject themselves to suspicion of their sanity. A missionary to India

ness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 And Agrippa *said* unto Paul, [3]With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a

[3]Or, *In a little* time *thou etc.*

---

said that his friends in America thought he was a fool for going, and the Indians thought he was a fool for coming.

From Festus, who knew little "of these things," Paul ventured to appeal to the king, who "understood" (stronger than knew), for Paul is persuaded that "no one" of the important features of Christ and Christianity had escaped the alert king—a delicate compliment as well as an appeal —for this new development out of Jewish religion had not been enacted in an obscure corner and then announced, but all had been in the open light of day (*verse* 26).

Paul's ardent soul can no longer hold back from a personal challenge to Agrippa: "Does he believe the prophets?" Then by way of sympathetic encouragement, "I know that thou believest" (*verse* 27).

Agrippa's answer and Paul's rejoinder constitute standing problems in interpretation. The language itself is not wholly clear, and its meaning, in Agrippa's case, depends very largely on the tone and manner with which he spoke, and that cannot possibly be determined with certainty. Literally, his words go, "In a little me thou dost persuade to make a Christian." In the light of Paul's answer this cannot possibly mean "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and the widely popular hymn, "Almost Persuaded," is founded on a wrong interpretation. It can mean that Agrippa confesses to a little persuasion to make a Christian of himself. At that, sarcasm may possibly lie back of the remark, although it is hard to see how any rational man could assume that attitude just now. Still Paul's personal challenge before a heathen audience may have nettled Agrippa. It can mean that Paul was within

Christian. 29 And Paul *said*, I would to God, that [4]whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.

30 And the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 and when they had withdrawn, they spake one to another, saying, This man doeth

[4]Or, *both in little and in great*, i. e., in all respects

---

a little of attempting to make a Christian of Agrippa, or, in a little measure, was attempting. In any event, we must keep in mind that "thou dost persuade" (active) does not mean "I am persuaded" (passive), but it may imply it. The suggestion "in a little time" must be rejected because it would call for a different mode in the verb and because it would not fit with Paul's reply. On the whole, the idea seems to be, "In a (little) measure thou dost persuade me (to allow you) to make a Christian of me," and then the tone must be guessed at. We should take account of Agrippa's using the term Christian which appears here for the second time in the New Testament, and was the heathen designation not yet adopted (so far as we may judge) by disciples of Jesus. This leaves Agrippa at best a doubtful "somewhat Christian" (*Broadus*).

Even if Agrippa's rejoinder was chilling, Paul's ardor for his experience is not cooled. He still politely urges the invitation, in the form of a prayer, "I would pray to God, both in little and in much for not only thee but also all these who are hearing me today to become such as even I am, aside from these bonds." Such was the glory of the grace of God in Paul that nothing could be conceived better; blessed is he who can magnify God's grace in his own experience and so in his own example.

e. Guiltless but Sent to Rome (*verses* 30–32).

Paul is done. No more noble appeal was ever made. He met all the aspects of a great occasion. The company of rulers and counselors went out and conferred. The unanimous verdict was, "Guilty of nothing calling for either death

nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 And Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

---

or bonds." So Lysias had found, and Festus, and now this august council. Its verdict is announced formally by Agrippa, who makes it his own. Festus had referred the case especially to him and he now gives his reply: "But for his having appealed his case to Cæsar this man might be dismissed." But once the appeal had been made, the case was out of the procurator's hands and could not be dismissed even if all parties agreed, and the Jews probably would not have consented. They were not consulted. Festus had yet nothing very "safe" to write, but he must have stated the case in a way favorable to Paul. He goes to Rome a prisoner, with no case against him.

(8) The Long, Notable Voyage to Rome. 27: 1—28: 15.

It is now the fall of 59 or 60. Paul has been a prisoner two and a half years. His long-deferred ambition to see Rome is to be realized, the Lord's promise that he should "bear his testimony into" that world capital fulfilled, but how differently from the way he had dreamed! Yet he is "the prisoner of the Lord," as he so often says, and is "content" to be a prisoner, secondarily, of Rome, also.

The account of this voyage has long been recognized as a classic gem of literary skill, for its descriptive vividness, its detailed accuracy even to the exact, scientific use of terms, and for its skillful proportion, so that the great idea of the superintending presence of God dominates the whole story notwithstanding so many secondary interests enter. This twenty-seventh chapter has been a bulwark of defense against the radical assaults on Luke's reliability.

a. First Stages of the Journey (27: 1–13).

The time had come, by determination of the authorities, for them to sail for Italy. Luke and Aristarchus of Thessalonica accompanied Paul as attending friends. Later in

27 And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan [5]band. 2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail unto the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. 3 And the next day we touched at Sidon: and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go unto his friends and [6]refresh himself. 4 And putting to sea from thence, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy; and he put us therein. 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and were come with diffi-

[5]Or, *cohort* [6]Gr. *receive attention.*

Rome Aristarchus is Paul's "fellow-prisoner" (Col. 4: 10), to be taken literally, but his arrest was probably in Rome (*verse* 2). With certain other prisoners (literally, "of a different sort"), he was put in charge of a captain connected with "the Cæsar's (Augustan) own band," Julius by name (*verse* 1). They took an Adramyttian ship, none direct for Rome being available. This one was to make the leading ports on the way home, and at Ephesus, if not sooner, they could certainly hope to get a vessel "for Italy" (*verse* 1). It turned out that they found one at Myra, Lycia (*verse* 6).

The first stop was at Sidon. Here Julius "with humane graciousness to Paul" allowed him to go ashore where he had personal friends "to give him attention." Thus we have found another kind centurion of whom we meet so many in the New Testament. Julius seemed well disposed to Paul from the start, and his admiration grew with the voyage.

Avoiding the already "contrary" winds, they sailed "under the lee of Cyprus," first mission field of Barnabas and Paul, and then along the coast of Cilicia with the homeland hills of Paul's boyhood looking down upon him, and then on by Pamphylia, behind whose mountains lay Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe. How Paul would be praying for his people as he passed thus almost in sight of them!

culty over against Cnidus, the wind not [7]further suffering us, we sailed under the lee of Crete, over against Salmone; 8 and with difficulty coasting along it we came unto a certain place called Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9 And when much time was spent, and the voyage was now dangerous, because the Fast was now already gone by, Paul admonished them, 10 and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the lading and the ship, but also of our lives. 11 But the centurion gave more heed to the master and to the owner of the ship, than to those things which were spoken by Paul. 12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to put to sea

[7]Or, *suffering us to get there*

Reference to a map will show how "slowly" they sailed against the west wind when in "several days" they had covered only a little more than on the first day of the trip to Sidon (*verse* 3). When they had "barely" got along the island Knidus, still hugging the coast for safety, they were "not suffered," by the wind, to reach it, and turned south to Crete, getting under the protection of its east coast by Salmone, and, with difficulty getting by its promontory, came at length to "Fair Havens harbor." The city of Lasea is known in current literature, but not specifically located. Here they delayed some time for better weather.

As it was now unsafe at sea, the equinox on, Paul proposed that they winter at Fair Havens. Luke's dating by "the Fast" (Atonement and Tabernacles) is curious in this connection and quite possibly indicates that Paul had, as a true Jew, observed this sacred day, in a Christian way. Paul urged his advice (imperfect) on those in authority until a council was held to determine on the proper course. He said that it appeared to him that the voyage was about to be attended with violent injury and great loss of cargo, ship and lives. Paul claims no inspiration for this view. He had had no little experience of the sea (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 25). Still we cannot wonder that "the centurion gave more heed to the master (captain) and to the owner than to Paul" for

from thence, if by any means they could reach Phœnix, and winter *there; which is* a haven of Crete, looking [8]north-east and south-east. 13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close in shore. 14 But after no long time there beat down from it a tempestuous wind, which is called Euraquilo: 15 and when the ship was caught, and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it*, and were driven. 16 And running under the lee of a small island called [9]Cauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat: 17 and when they had hoisted it up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should be cast upon the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and so were

[8]Gr. *down the south-west wind and down the north-west wind.*
[9]Many ancient authorities read *Clauda.*

---

they were more experienced and, so far as he could know, had more at stake; not that the centurion was able to control the ship's sailing, but he could take off his prisoners and wait. It was decided to try to make Phœnix, further west, with a haven "looking down the southwest wind and down the southeast wind," *i. e.*, from the shore point of view, a rather curious way of putting it.

When a south wind arose they thought the time had come to realize their plan and moved on, hugging the shore.

b. Two Weeks of Storm, Ending in a Wreck (*verses* 14–43).

Shortly after this start "a typhoon wind," called Euraquilo, beat down upon them from the island, "snatched hold of the ship" which was no longer able to face it. There was nothing to do but surrender, to be driven for a time, until under the slight protection of a small island, Cauda (or Clauda, modern Gozzo), they were able to make some better provision against the storm (*verses* 16f). The small boat which was trailing they hauled aboard with great difficulty. They would need it if the worst came. Next they braced the hull by running cables round it, possibly employing also some timbers ("helps") under the cables. After the fear of the ship's going to pieces, the great dread was being driven on (into) the Syrtis, shoal sands off the coast of Africa.

driven. 18 And as we labored exceedingly with the storm,
the next day they began to throw *the freight* overboard;
19 and the third day they cast out with their own hands the
[10]tackling of the ship. 20 And when neither sun nor stars
shone upon *us* for many days, and no small tempest lay on *us*,
all hope that we should be saved was now taken away. 21
And when they had been long without food, then Paul stood
forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have
hearkened unto me, and not have set sail from Crete, and

[10]Or, *furniture*

Against this danger "they lowered the gear," an ambiguous phrase which is best interpreted as dropping an anchor or other weight to retard the progress by dragging. Other possible meanings are "lowering the sail," which can hardly have been up; or lowering the mast, which would help. They were exceeding "belabored by" (not "labored with") the storm, so that next day they began throwing overboard ("making a casting out") some of the cargo. Again the next day, so imminent was the danger, all hands threw out "the furniture" of the ship, another term that cannot be definitely decided. It must mean parts of the rigging, or of the general furniture, the loss of which would in good weather be keenly felt.

For many days they thus drifted and were driven without sun or stars and so wholly unable to determine where they were. Modern shipping is luxurious and safe in comparison with the ancient. "A tempest not small lay on," so that "all hope of deliverance was abandoned" (*verse* 20).

A supreme emergency was Paul's opportunity (*verses* 21–26). He showed his qualities of trust, self-resourcefulness, initiative—all because of his faith and fellowship in God. The strain of toil in the storm, the nervous tension of the danger, the gloom of the dark days, had so occupied and depressed them that they were "long without food" (literally, "there having been much abstinence"). Paul took his stand for an encouraging speech. He suggests confidence in his counsel by reminding them that his former advice would have prevented their "gaining this injury" and such "loss" as

have gotten this injury and loss. 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, 24 saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar: and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me. 26 But we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven to and fro in the *sea of* Adria, about midnight the sailors surmised that they were drawing near to some country: 28 and they sounded, and found twenty fathoms; and after a little space, they sounded again, and found fifteen fathoms. 29 And fearing lest haply we should be cast ashore on rocky ground, they let go four anchors from the stern,

---

was involved. And now he is going to try his advice again. He exhorts cheerfully (the word has the root for singing) to be in good spirit. There is to be no loss of life—"loss of life none at all will there be"—nothing except the ship. He gives now as his ground for this assurance that from his God an angel had stood by (and for) him that night with a message: "Do not fear, Paul; before Cæsar it is necessary for thee to stand: and see, God hath granted to thee in grace all those sailing with thee." "Therefore," he now adds, "be in cheerful spirits, gentlemen, for I believe the (my) God, that thus it shall be, according to the way which he has talked to me of." Still they were to "fall out on" a certain island.

All, then, were to be saved by Paul's God, and as a favor to his slave and worshiper. No one could forget that message. God's words through Paul are now to be fulfilled. For fourteen days of dreadful storm they had been driven, when in the night the sailors became aware of the proximity of land (literally, "that some country was approaching them," a seaman's phrase). They would know by sound, by smell, and by change in the atmosphere, as any one knows who has been to sea. The soundings showed rapid decrease in depth (*verse* 28), and they "let go ("caused to fall out") four

and [1]wished for the day. 30 And as the sailors were seeking to flee out of the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, under color as though they would lay out anchors from the foreship, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. 33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take some food, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye wait and continue fasting, hav-

[1]Or, *prayed*

---

anchors, from the stern, so that the ship would not swing about, but be ready to run ashore as soon as it was light, and "prayed for it to get to be day" (*verse* 29). Some stumble at this form of statement, but any who have watched through a weary night in sickness will need no explanation. Lord Nelson studied this chapter of Acts just before the battle of Copenhagen and used this device of the stern anchors, which is unusual.

The cowardly sailors sought in the cover of the darkness to desert the ship by means of the boat, pretending that they were going to lay fore anchors also (*verse* 30). But Paul was on the lookout. God's assurance meant for him encouragement to exert himself to the fullest. That was always Paul's way. When he found an unfulfilled prophecy or promise it was a call to him to go to work with God to fulfill it. He would use all means and guard all hindrances. So, now, he told the centurion what was toward, and declared that the passengers could not be saved if the sailors got away. The soldiers found a short solution, cutting the ropes of the boat, already swung out, and letting her drift away. They were learning to trust Paul rather than the sailors (*verses* 31f).

Paul was now the real commander of the entire party, soldiers, other passengers and crew, as well as of centurion, captain and owner. Paul had a way of getting in command of every group of which he became a part. It was God's way with him. Character and calmness count. It was important for their deliverance that they take nourishment,

ing taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I beseech you to take some food: for this is for your safety: for there shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had said this, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all; and he brake it, and began to eat. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and themselves took food. 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred and threescore and sixteen souls. 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. 39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they perceived a certain bay with a beach, and they took counsel whether they could [2]drive the ship upon it. 40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the

[2]Some ancient authorities read *bring the ship safe to shore.*

---

when for two weeks there had been no chance for regular food or rest. Paul thus exhorted them (*verses* 33f), again assuring them of safety by a current proverb, "There shall not a hair perish," etc.

Acting on his own advice, Paul led the way in eating, but not until he first gave thanks to his (the) God in the presence of all, this because it was the right way, and true to his own feeling, and because it again emphasized their all being in the hands of God. The rest now all followed Paul's example in the eating, whether they shared the thanks or not. They felt more hopeful, so they could eat. We now get the roster of the ship, two hundred and seventy-six (*verses* 35–37). The large number has troubled many and caused confusion in the manuscripts. But Josephus was wrecked in this same region a few years later with six hundred on board.

Now, the meal over, they threw out the cargo of wheat which, some at least, they had saved till now. The ship must draw as little water as possible for the rush in, to beach her (*verse* 39).

The sailors were unable to recognize the land in the light of the morning, not approaching it at the usual port, and the light being dim. They recognized a bay with a sandy beach, and after counseling together decided to try to "drive" the ship in. They made all preparation (*verse* 40). They wasted no time with the anchors but cast off their chains,

sea, at the same time loosing the bands of the rudders; and hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. 41 But lighting upon a place where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the foreship struck and remained unmovable, but the stern began to break up by the violence *of the waves*. 42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any *of them* should swim out and escape. 43 But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stayed them from their purpose; and commanded that they who could swim should cast themselves overboard, and get first to the land; 44 and the rest, some on planks, and some on *other* things from the ship. And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to the land.

---

leaving all in the sea; loosed the bands of the great rudders which had now been tied up as useless for twelve days, but which would help to reach the bay; hoisted up the foresail, not risking any others, nor taking time for them. Now "they made for the beach." But the way was not clear. Cross currents had swept up a bank of sand under the water into which they ran and stuck fast. The rear part of the ship at once "began to break up under the force" of the wild sea (*verse* 41).

Now a new danger arose. The soldiers were responsible for the prisoners with their own lives, and they might escape when released to get to land. The soldiers advised, therefore, that they kill the prisoners, an easy way to safety for themselves. But the centurion wanted "to be sure to save Paul" and instead of yielding to the inhuman suggestion, gave command that all should seek to save themselves. Such as could swim were to get away first, at once. They would thus have a clearer sea for swimming and might be able to rescue others as they came in on planks and upon "anything" they could get "from the ship."

"And thus (this way) it came to pass that all were completely saved on (the) land." "Thus," by the plan and providence of God, and by wise planning, watchful care and vigorous exertion. Paul's confidence in his God (*verse* 25) has been fully justified in the outcome. He has had a new

28 And when we were escaped, then we knew that the island was called [3]Melita. 2 And the barbarians showed us no common kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us all, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out [4]by reason of the heat and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* creature hanging from his hand, they said one to another, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped from the sea, yet Justice hath not suffered to live. 5 Howbeit he shook off the creature into

[3]Some ancient authorities read *Melitene.* [4]Or, *from the heat*

opportunity to bear witness to men who would not have known his God otherwise, and he has again been faithful.

c. Three Months with the Barbarians, Melita (28: 1–10).

When their safety was accomplished they had a chance to find out that the land they had reached was the island Melita—almost beyond question the modern Malta (*verse* 1). The Greeks called all other people barbarians, not in contempt especially, but in imitation of the unintelligible sounds of an unknown tongue. Luke uses that term of these islanders, who were of Phœnician origin. Luke pays them tribute by testifying "they furnished not the usual philanthropy to us," but rather gave special attention to the wants of the stranded people. They lit a fire as part of their reception, because it was raining and cold and all were, of course, wet. No sufficient shelter was to be found there for so many (*verse* 2).

Paul, as always, must have a hand in work, and so "got together some multitude of sticks," but when he "put them on the fire" a viper, warmed up, came out and fastened on his hand. The superstitious "barbarians," having already noticed, doubtless, that Paul was one of the prisoners, quickly concluded that there could be "no doubt" ("by all means" was their way of putting it), that he was a murderer whom Justice, an avenging goddess, had pursued in spite of his escape from the sea, and smitten with this serpent (*verses* 3f).

the fire, and took no harm. 6 But they expected that he would have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but when they were long in expectation and beheld nothing amiss come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius; who received us, and entertained us three days courteously. 8 And it was so, that the father of Publius lay sick of fever and dysentery: unto whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laying his hands on him healed him. 9 And when this was done, the rest also that had diseases in the island came, and were cured: 10 who also honored us with many honors;

Paul shook the serpent off with no apparent injury or concern. The serpent may not have injected any poison, or God may supernaturally have delivered Paul. For a time the natives watched, expecting to see him swell or suddenly fall dead. But when it was evident that "nothing out of place" was to befall him, they "changed over," and said that Paul was himself a divine being. We recall how the Lycaonian barbarians had made the opposite change of view (chapter 14). Luke does not tell us what manifestations of their reverence these men gave (*verses* 5–7). "The first man of the island," Publius, had estates and a residence in the neighborhood, and he "received" the centurion and Paul's party—for so many the "us" (*verse* 7) must include—and entertained them as his guests for three days. Paul repaid this kindness by healing Publius' father of fever and dysentery. He did it by prayer and laying his hands on the man, thus definitely giving God the credit for it (*verse* 8).

This brought on a general healing, for the other sick of the island came to Paul for this purpose. In their turn the people expressed gratitude by "many honors" and especially by providing "such things as they had need of" when the time came for sailing (*verses* 9, 10).

d. Final Stages of the Journey (*verses* 11–15).

Three months, the winter, was spent in Malta, when passage was taken on another grain ship of Alexandria, which

and when we sailed, they put on board such things as we needed.

11 And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the island, whose sign was [5]The Twin Brothers. 12 And touching at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. 13 And from thence we [6]made a circuit, and arrived at Rhegium: and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli; 14 where we found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days: and so we came to Rome. 15 And from thence the brethren, when they heard of us, came to

[5]Gr. *Dioscuri.* [6]Some ancient authorities read *cast loose.*

---

had taken refuge in Malta for the winter. Luke tells us that it had the sign on the prow, in painted figures, of "The Twin Brothers," Castor and Pollux, the well-known constellation personalized in the Latin list of gods, and especially the gods of sailors.

With a stop of three days at Syracuse, Sicily, one day at Rhegium, on the toe of Italy, waiting for a wind, they came to Puteoli, on the bay of Naples, where they landed, to make the remaining journey by land.

At Puteoli, Paul and his companions found Christian brethren and the kindness of Julius allowed them to yield to the entreaty to remain seven days. Julius probably left a soldier with Paul, and himself went on with the other prisoners.

"And thus we came to Rome," Luke writes. It was the consummation of a long journey, the disappointing fulfillment of a long-cherished hope and plan. But God had been all along the way, and the Lord had from time to time said, "Fear not, my plan is fulfilling." It is best to have come with God and not to have gone before him. "The brethren" at Rome someway heard the facts about them and their plans. Did Julius carry a message for Paul? From Puteoli to Rome is about a hundred and twenty-five miles. One company of Christians met them at the "Appian Forum," forty miles out, and another at "Three Taverns," thirty miles out. This demonstration of love, confidence and sympathy stirred

meet us as far as The Market of Appius and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we entered into Rome, [7]Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days he called together [8]those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jeru-

[7]Some ancient authorities insert *the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Chief of the camp: but etc.*
[8]Or, *those that were of the Jews first*

Paul deeply. He "thanked God and took courage." God had again met him in this gracious reception by brethren, most of whom he must never have seen before, and he felt a new sense of assurance that he would be with God in Rome.

(9) Two Years in Rome. 28: 16–31.

a. The arrangements (*verse* 16) *for Paul.* They were as favorable as could be for a prisoner. The clause in the Authorized Version about the centurion is properly omitted from the text, but Paul would be reported to him on arrival. "It was permitted to him to abide to himself," not with other prisoners, nor confined in a prison, but with a soldier who guarded him. The usual way was for prisoner and guard to be chained together. Since Paul (*verse* 30) had "private hired" lodgings with entire freedom to receive all who cared to visit him, it may well be that he was trusted so far as not to be chained to his guard, at least not all the time.

b. A Conference with Jews (*verses* 17–22). As soon as he could get settled "after three days," Paul called the most prominent Jews ("those being first") for a conference. He desired as far as possible to be on friendly terms with these Roman Jews. With courteous fraternal address, "Gentlemen, brothers," he gave a simple statement of the facts: "He had done nothing in opposition to the Jewish people nor contrary to the ancestral customs;" yet as a "prisoner

salem into the hands of the Romans: 18 who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation. 20 For this cause therefore did I [g]entreat you to see and to speak with *me:* for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judæa concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee. 22 But

[g]Or, *call for you, to see and to speak with* you

---

out of Jerusalem he was turned over into the hands of the Romans;" these, in their turn, desired to release him on the ground that there was no cause of death in him; the antagonism of the Jews to this course made necessary Paul's appeal to Cæsar. Hence he was here in Rome, not as an accuser of his (still his) nation, but only in necessary defense of his own life and freedom. He desired this meeting that they might see each other face to face and talk frankly over his case, because it was for the sake of the characteristic hope of Israel, the hope which had been the formative idea in their history, that he had this chain surrounding him.

The Jews probably told the truth when they said (*verse* 21) that no written message concerning Paul had come from Judæa, nor had any Jew who had come officially announced or privately related anything concerning him that was bad. It had not been a good winter for travel, and the Sanhedrin could hardly hope to find it worth the trouble and expense to accuse Paul at Rome when every effort had been exhausted in their own province where all the advantage lay with them and where they had heard a military officer, two Roman governors and a Jewish-Roman king pronounce Paul guiltless. It is not likely that they ever prosecuted the case at Rome. The long imprisonment there was partly due to waiting for the Jews to be represented and partly to the rising Roman antagonism to the growing Christianity. While they professed to have no charge against Paul, still the

we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded *the matter*, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. 25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers, 26 saying,

---

Jews said (*verse* 22) they "thought it worth while" to hear from Paul what his views were, for "concerning this sect" with which Paul was connected it was "known to them that everywhere it was spoken against." They would like to have an authoritative presentation of it. Incidentally this indicates that Peter had, not yet at least, been in Rome.

c. By Appointment Paul "Persuades the Jews Concerning Jesus (*verses* 23–28).

They came in great numbers. They put in a full day "from early morning till vespers." Thus Paul had time "to set out for them with full testimony the kingdom of their God." He drew upon the rich fields of the Law of Moses and the Prophets to persuade them that Jesus was the hope of Israel and the Saviour of men (*verse* 23).

And "some of them were persuaded," while others rejected ("were disbelieving") (*verse* 24). They manifested their lack of agreement, probably by some vigorous expressions *pro* and *con*. They were going off when Paul detained them for one final, solemn word of warning. We must not forget how much depends upon the tone in which this passage from Isaiah's call (chapter 6) was given. How Paul would do this we may learn from Romans 9: 1–5; 10: 1–4. With the pathos of deep yearning, like that of Jesus over Jerusalem, he had to tell them that a time came when God's message became a rejecting, hardening judgment against unbelievers

[10]Go thou unto this people, and say.
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;
And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive:
27 For this people's heart is waxed gross,
And their ears are dull of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed;
Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And should turn again,
And I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear.[1]

[10]Is. vi. 9, 10.
[1]Some ancient authorities insert ver. 29 *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, having much disputing among themselves.*

---

rather than a calling invitation to redemption. Eyes that will not see at last are blinded by the flashing brightness of God's light; ears that have been dulled for hearing are at last destroyed by the thunder of bursting judgment; hearts that have grown gross are burned in the consuming fire of rejected love.

God cannot wait forever on the religious pride that calls for first place in election, but will take no place in true religion. Paul will, in Rome as elsewhere, turn to the Gentiles to whom also this salvation of God is sent. "And they will hear." The salvation must be carried to those who will hear. Thus a final piercing word that might provoke some to a jealous grasping of their salvation (cf. Rom. 11: 14).

The omitted *verse* 29 repeats with a little more of emphasis what we already have in *verse* 25, and is certainly an interpolation.

d. Active in Kingdom Work While a Prisoner (*verses* 30–31).

In his last letter from prison, five or six years later, in an exultant mood, Paul exclaims that in spite of its messenger being confined, "the Word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2: 9). So, now, for all this two years, as for the three years preceding, the great apostle works from prison and

30 And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

---

sends abroad the word of salvation and of the kingdom of God. Messengers come and go. "Unhindered" he heralds the kingdom of God and teaches the things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ with full boldness." He is able to send abroad a dear "child whom he had begotten in his bonds" (Phil. 10), and this was but one among many. He is able to send Christian salutation from all the saints in Rome with a special greeting from "them of Cæsar's household" (Phil. 4: 22), not members of the family, but honored attendants. At least four letters go out from this period of confinement, including the most profound and comprehensive statement of the origin and meaning of the Christian enterprise ever written (Ephesians). His Lord had kept his promise and gone with Paul to Rome. And through him and Luke the Holy Spirit was writing the record of the gospel for all ages. This "Gospel of the Holy Spirit" came to its end here, but went forth as a gospel from then till the end of time, from there to the ends of the earth.

Resume of the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

We may now seek to summarize "the Gospel of the Holy Spirit" in a few words. For his work in the development of personal character in the Christian we should need to study the Epistles, especially Philippians, Romans 8, passages in Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians. For his work in developing the church we have the Corinthian letters, in addition to Acts, which is mainly given to the growth of the gospel by means of its witnesses fulfilling the Commission. It is to Jesus himself, in John 13–17, that we go for

the fullest brief statement of *the function* of the Holy Spirit. Having reference chiefly to our studies in Acts and to these words of our Lord, we may summarize his work as follows:

1. *To abide in believers*, where his functions are: (1) to assert and to realize their unity with the Father and the Son; (2) to produce and maintain unity among the believers themselves; (3) to comfort and encourage in Christian experience; (4) to purify and sanctify the life and the living—the character and conduct of the believers.

2. *To endue witnesses of Jesus:* (1) with understanding and insight, (*a*) recalling the words of Jesus, (*b*) interpreting the things of Jesus Christ to those who are to know and to fulfill them, (*c*) guiding them into all the truth; (2) with wisdom in their service, (*a*) for determining the place of service, (*b*) for selecting words in their testimony, (*c*) in meeting persecution that arises in the progress of the testimony; (3) with power when witnessing. (*a*) convicting the world, *i. e.*, sinners, (*b*) demonstrating the truth of the witness with signs and wonders; (4) with approval as he extends and establishes the gospel through the witnesses.

3. *To indwell the church* as its formative principle and power, building it up so that it is brought to realize the Messianic function in history, constructing the church as the body of Christ, and so fulfilling the glory of God's redeeming love in the church and in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3: 16–21; 4: 11–16).

May these studies of the work of the Holy Spirit in the first witnesses help in some little measure to make present-day witnesses a little more faithful and a little more efficient.

A Section Outline of Acts and Apostolic History

By W. O. CARVER

Sometime Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation in Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

COPYRIGHT BY W. O. CARVER, 1922.

I. Introduction: Preparation for and Advent of the Holy Spirit. Chaps. 1 to 2:21.

§1. Connection of the Gospel of the Holy Spirit (Acts) with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.....Chap. 1:1-3

§2. Jesus' preparation of his disciples for the Holy Spirit .....Chap. 1:4-11

§3. The disciples' preparation for the Holy Spirit, Chap. 1:12-26

§4. Advent of the Holy Spirit and explanation of his presence .....Chap. 2:1-21

II. Witnessing In Jerusalem. Chaps. 2:22 to 8:1a.

§5. First sermon, 3,000 converts .....Chap. 2:22-41

§6. A view of the first church in its life and work, Chap. 2:42-47

§7. Healing a lame man gives opportunity for witnessing and winning .....Chaps. 3:1 to 4:4

§8. Persecution used for witnessing to rulers..Chap. 4:5-31

§9. Problem of poverty defines Christian attitude toward property and promotes unusual success .....Chaps. 4:32 to 5:16

§10. Sadducees make second, determined effort to suppress the work, but fear to become "God-fighters" ..... Chap. 5:17-42

§11. Dissension leads to selection of deacons .... Chap. 6:1-6

§12. Great success, making inroads even on the priests ..... Chap. 6:7

§13. Stephen witnesses even unto death—the first "martyr" ..... Chaps. 6:8 to 8:1a

III. Witnessing in All Judea-Samaria. Chaps. 8 to 12.

§14. General persecution—led by Saul and the Pharisees—promotes Christian expansion ..... Chap. 8:1-4

§15. Philip becomes the first "Evangelist"—Samaria, Eunuch, Azotus, all the cities unto Caesarea ..... Chap. 8:5-40

§16. The Lord Jesus "lays hold on" Saul the persecutor and begins the making of the Apostle to the Gentiles ..... Chap. 9:1-30

§17. The church prospers in peace ..... Chap. 9:31

§18. Peter, on a general tour, heals and wins many at Lydda ..... Chap. 9:32-35

§19. At Joppa Peter restores Dorcas and many more turn to the Lord ..... Chap. 9:36-43

§20. The Holy Spirit brings Peter to Cornelius at Caesarea and brings "devout" Gentiles into the church ..... Chap. 10

§21. Called to account at Jerusalem, Peter convinces the Jewish church that God granted to Gentiles "repentance unto life" ..... Chap. 11:1-18

§22. The Holy Spirit uses some unnamed laymen to inaugurate evangelization of real heathen at Antioch and then introduces Barnabas and Saul into this work ..... Chap. 11:19-26

§23. Taking advantage of a famine, the Holy Spirit welds a bond of sympathy between Gentile and Jewish Christians ..... Chaps. 11:27-30; 12:25

§24. The church oppressed by the civil power—James slain, the Angel of the Lord takes a hand ..... Chap. 12

IV. Witnessing "Unto the Uttermost Part of the Earth;" Foreign Missions Entered Upon. Chaps. 13:1 to 21:26.

§25. The Holy Spirit definitely inaugurates foreign mission work ..... Chap. 13:1-3
1. First Mission Tour, Barnabas, Saul, Mark and others ..... Chaps. 13:4 to 14:28

§26. Evangelizing Cyprus from Salamis to Paphos—Sergius Paulus and Elymas ..... Chap. 13:4-12

§27. At Perga John Mark deserts ..... Chap. 13:13

§28. Antioch in Pisidia—success with Jews; great success with Gentiles; expelled from city; all the region evangelized ..... Chap. 13:14-52

§29. Iconium—long stay; multitude of converts; driven out by enemies ..... Chap. 14:1-6

§30. Lystra—heal cripple; worshipped; mobbed Chap. 14:7-20

§31. At Derbe they "make many disciples" Chap. 14:20-21

§32. Returning they establish all the churches, evangelize ..... Chap. 14:21-24

§33. Preach at Perga, omit Cyprus, return to Antioch in Syria and rest ..... Chap. 14:25-28

§34. James writes his Epistle.
2. Settling the Gospel for the Gentiles.... Chap. 15:1-35

§35. Controversy over requirements for Gentile Christians, Judaizers vs. Barnabas and Paul, Chap. 15:1-2

§36. Freedom affirmed in Conference at Jerusalem, Chap. 15:3-35; Gal. 2:1-10

(1) Reference to Jerusalem; (2) general report of work; (3) Apostles and elders hold conference; (4) open meeting and unanimous decision; (5) delegation sent with letter to Antioch; (6) harmony and work.

§37. Paul, at Antioch, contends with Peter over the issue of the free gospel of grace .....Gal., 2:11-21

3. Second Mission Tour, Paul and Silas and others .....Chaps. 15:36 to 18:22

§38. Division over John Mark .....Chap. 15:36-40

§39. Confirming the churches in Syria and Cilicia Chap. 15:41

§40. Revisiting the churches of the first tour—Paul finds Timothy .....Chap. 16:1-5

§41. Finding the mind of the Spirit—at Troas led into Macedonia .....Chap. 16:6-10

§42. Philippi, begin evangelization of Europe—Lydia and household; maid with the spirit of divination; beaten by magistrates and imprisoned; delivered by earthquake, baptize jailer; leave with dignity .....Chap. 16:11-40

§43. Great ministry in Thessalonica; Jews cause trouble; misssionaries move on .....Chap. 17:1-10a

§44. Berea—win many; found church; Thessalonian Jews cause Paul to leave, Silas and Timothy remaining .....Chap. 17:10b-14

§45. Athens—Paul waiting for his friends has unique ministry—Mars Hill .....Chap. 17:15-34

§46. A year and a half in Corinth—making tents with Aquila and Priscilla and persuading Jews and Greeks; in house of Titus Justus; before Gallio gains legal recognition of Christianity; many believed and were baptized.....Chap. 18:1-17

§47. Two letters to Thessalonians while at Corinth, 1 and 2 Thess.

§48. Incidental ministry at Ephesus en route to Antioch ..... Chap. 18:18-22
4. Third Mission Tour ..... Chap. 18:23 to 21, 26

§49. "Establishing all the disciples" of Galatia-Phrygia ..... Chap. 18:23

§50. Apollos at Ephesus and Corinth ..... Chap. 18:24-28

§51. Dealing with twelve men at Ephesus improperly baptized ..... Chap. 19:1-7

§52. Three years in Ephesus during which "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord"; work elsewhere directed ..... Chap. 19:8-20

§53. Letters, messengers and a visit to Corinth, dealing with problems there; also messages to Macedonia ..... Chap. 19:21-22; 1 Cor.

§54. Great mob at Ephesus ..... Chaps. 19:23 to 20:1

§55. "Much exhortation" in Macedonia ..... Chap. 20:2

§56. In Macedonia Paul meets Titus and writes 2 Corinthians ..... 2 Cor. 7:6

§57. Three months in Corinth, threatened by a Jewish plot ..... Chap. 20:3

§58. Writes Galatian epistle (very possibly earlier) .... Gal.

§59. Writes Roman epistle (certainly at this time) .... Rom.

§60. On to Jerusalem—important stops at Troas; Miletus; Tyre; Caesarea ..... Chaps. 20:3 to 21:16

§61. At Jerusalem Paul and the Brethren again confirm their Gospel agreement and seek to placate the Judaizers and the Jews ..... Chap. 21:17-26

V. Paul in the Hands of His Enemies (May Be Treated as Extension of IV.) Chaps. 21:27 to 28:31.

1. In the midst of mobs in Jerusalem, Chaps. 21:27 to 23:30

§62. Paul mobbed by angry Jews, rescued by Roman colonel ..... Chap. 21:27-39

§63. Addresses the mob from the tower stairs, Chaps. 21:40 to 22:21

§64. Paul's Roman citizenship saves him from scourging ..... Chap. 22:22-29

§65. Presented before the Sanhedrin Paul saves himself by setting the Pharisees and the Sadducees upon one another ..... Chaps. 22:30 to 23-10

§66. The Lord reassures Paul in a special vision Chap. 23:11

§67. Paul saved from a plot by his nephew and Claudius Lysias, the Roman colonel; sent to Caesarea ..... Chap. 23:12-30

2. Two years and a half delay of justice in Caesarea ..... Chaps. 23:31 to 26:32

§68. Received and slated by Governor Felix Chap. 23:31-35

§69. The hearing before Felix—decision delayed, Chap. 24:1-23

§70. Paul preaches to Felix and Drusilla; and often "communed" with Felix, but held..... Chap. 24:24-27

§71. New Governor, Festus, by dallying forces appeal to Caesar ..... Chap. 25:1-12

§72. Festus arranges for Paul to be heard by King Herod Agrippa—Paul's notable address, Chaps. 25:13 to 26:32

3. The eventful voyage to Rome..Chaps. 27:1 to 28:15

§73. First stages of the journey—Sidon, Myra, Fair Havens, Phoenix ..... Chap. 27:1-13

§74. Two weeks in storm, shipwrecked.....Chap. 27:14-43

§75. Three months in Melita (Malta) .....Chap. 28:1-10

§76. Final stages of the journey—Syracuse, Puteoli, Market of Appius, Three Taverns, Rome, Chap. 28:11-15

4. Two years in liberal confinement in Rome, Chap. 28:16-31

§77. Conferences with the Jews .....Chap. 28:16-28

§78. Preaching and teaching .....Chap. 28:30-31

§79. Writing letters .....Phil., Col., Eph., Philem.

§80. Luke probably now writes his Gospel from material collected while at Caesarea, and Acts, which is his Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

VI. The Period Subsequent to Paul's Release (Mainly Traditional, No Direct Historical Data).

1. Paul's experiences.

§81. Journey of visitation to Asia .....Cf. Philem.

§82. Possible ministry in Spain .....Cf. Rom. 15:24

§83. Tour including Crete, Ephesus, Troas, Macedonia, etc.....Cf. 2 Tim. 4; 1 Tim. 1:3

§84. 1 Timothy, from Macedonia, A.D. 66 or 67.

§85. Titus, probably same time as 1 Tim.

§86. Arrest and second imprisonment in Rome, when he wrote 2 Timothy, A.D. 67 or 68.

§87. Martyrdom, A.D. 68.

§88. 2. Gospels of Mark and Matthew, A.D. 68-70, Mark possibly earlier.

3. Peter's late work and experiences.

§89. Writes first epistle to encourage Christians under Nero's persecution, A.D. 64 or 65.

§90. Writes second epistle to encourage loyalty to Christ and the faith, A.D. 67.

§91. Martyrdom, A.D. 67 or 68.

§92. 4. Jude's vigorous call to steadiness in faith and life, A.D. 66.

§93. 5. Vigorous exposition of Christianity as the ideal religion, compared with Judaism, by an anonymous author, about A.D. 70—Hebrews.

6. The writings of John.

§94. The Revelation, to assure Christians in a time of persecution and great distress, either about A.D. 65 or 95.

§95. An Apologetic Gospel of Jesus Christ to meet the Jewish-Alexandrian Philosophy—Gospel of John, about A.D. 90-95.

§96. An epistle to save Christians from the follies and sins of Gnosticism, 1 John, A.D. 85 to 95.

§97. A brief commendation for loyalty in the face of Gnostic teaching, 2 John, A.D. 85 to 95.

§98. A letter commending Gaius for noble support of missionaries under adverse circumstances, 3 John, A.D. 80 to 85, possibly much earlier.

These Outlines may be had from the Author. Single copies 5c; price in quantities on application.

John Newport